The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Computer Gaming World

THE NEW LOOK OF COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

ZD

MAY 1996
NO.142

Rule The Galaxy

Planetary Warfare Strikes The Net In *DEADLOCK*



Starcheat Academy

Ruthless Strategies For:

- Wing Commander IV
- Chronomaster
- MW2: Ghost Bear's Legacy

Hack Duke Nukem 3D

BONUS SECTION

The Sony Playstation


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— PC Power



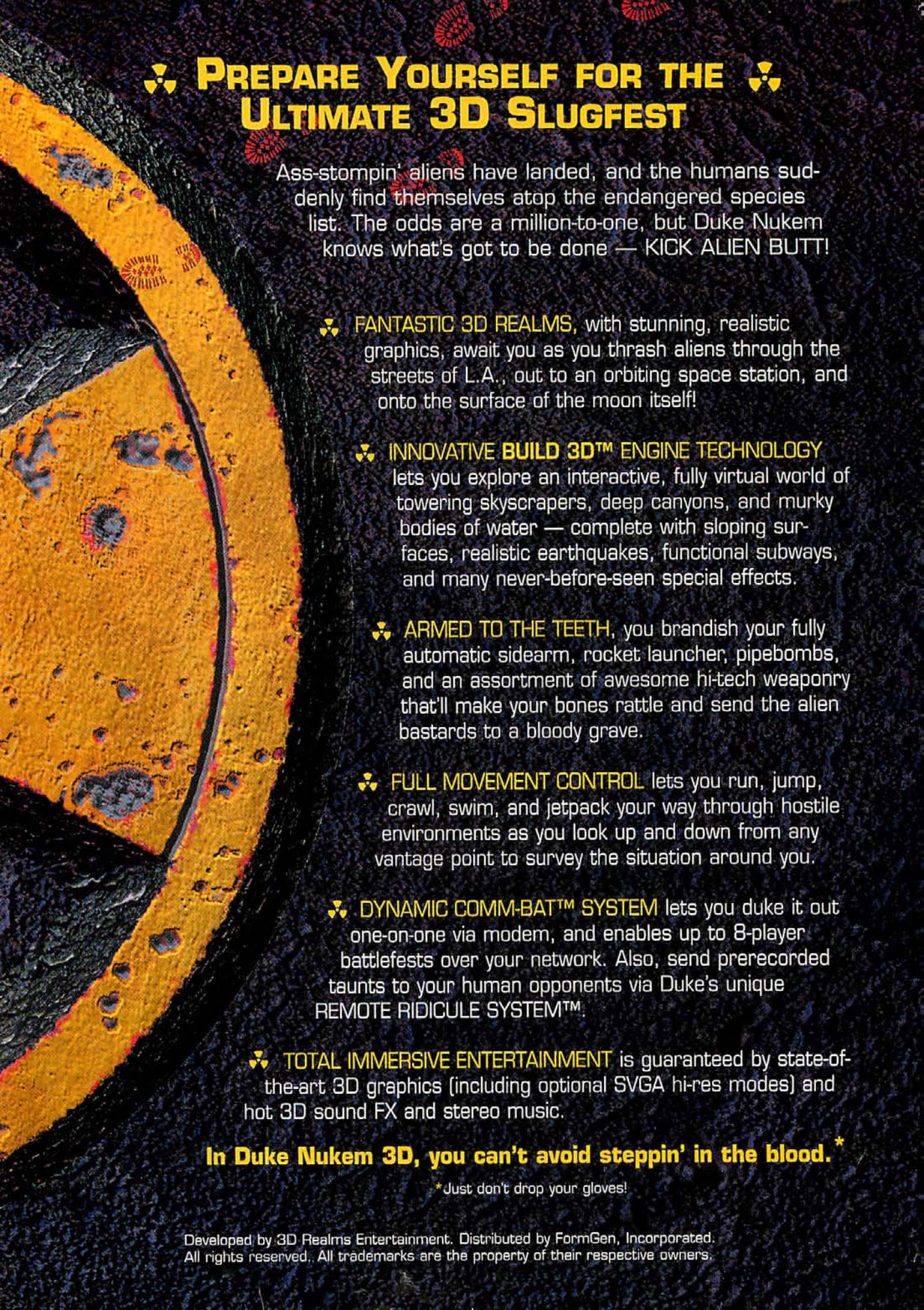
"Duke Nukem 3D truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy, and gory with lead-thrashing action."
— Strategy Plus



"It makes pretty much every PC game we've ever seen - Doom included - look slightly dull. Honestly!"
— PC Gamer



"The Build engine's flexibility means that pretty much anything goes in Duke Nukem 3D."
— Edge Magazine



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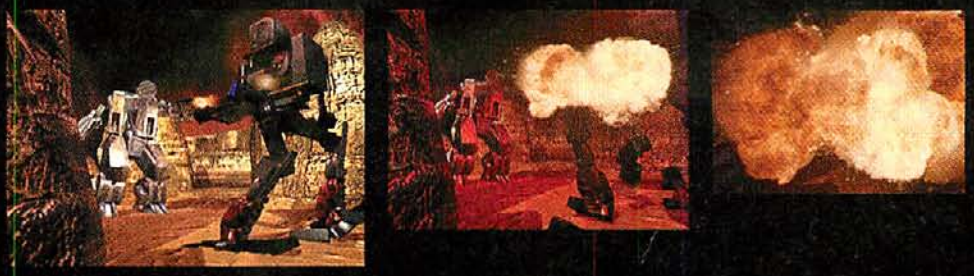


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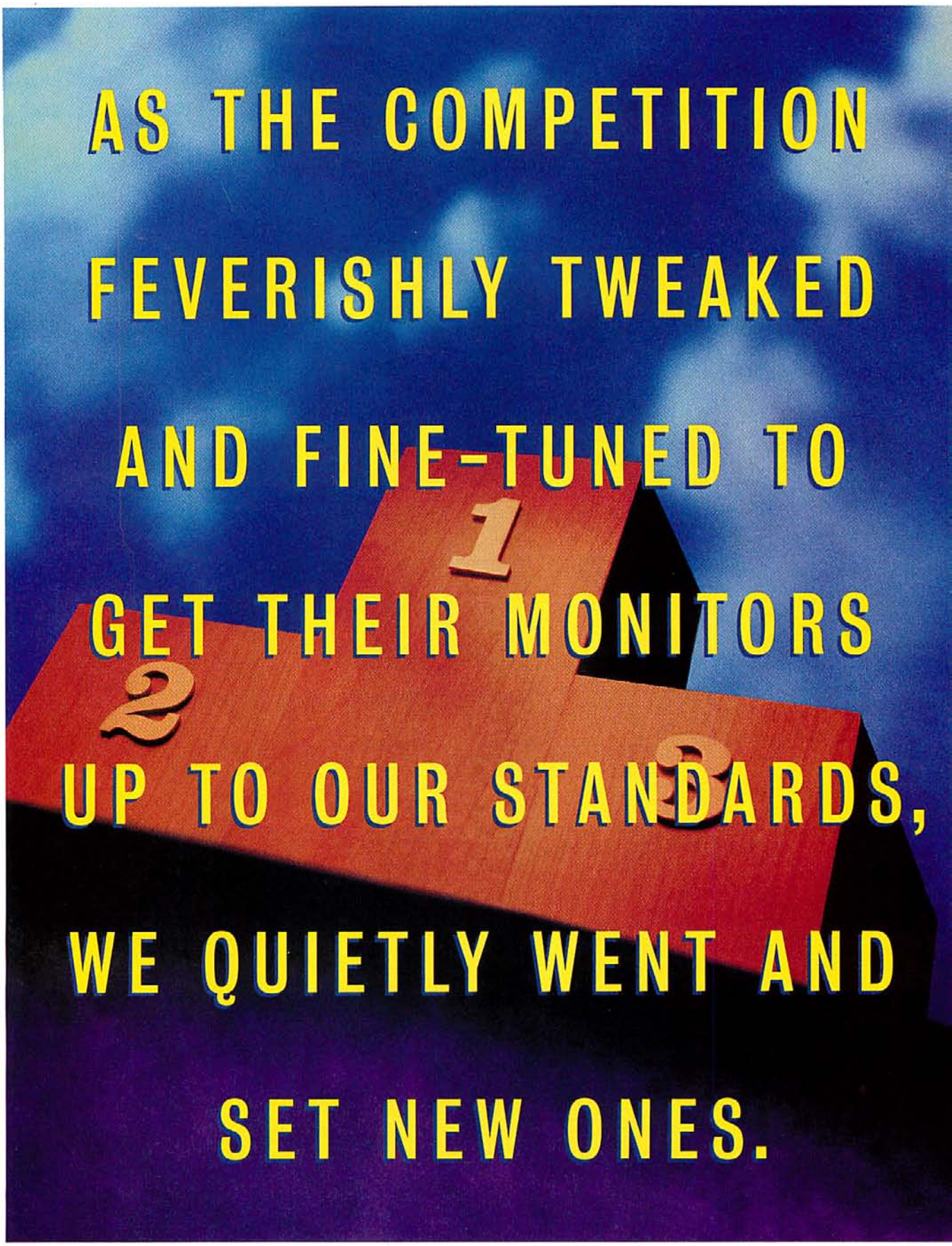
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DEADLOCK puts the future of an entire alien race on the player's shoulders in a high stakes, winner-take-all race for planetary control. Denny Atkin discovers that the new multi-player build, research and conquer game is a combination of M.U.L.E., SIMCITY, and CIVILIZATION.



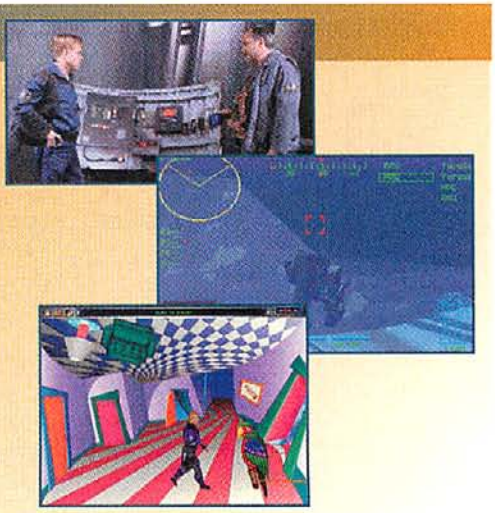
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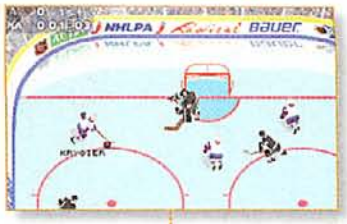
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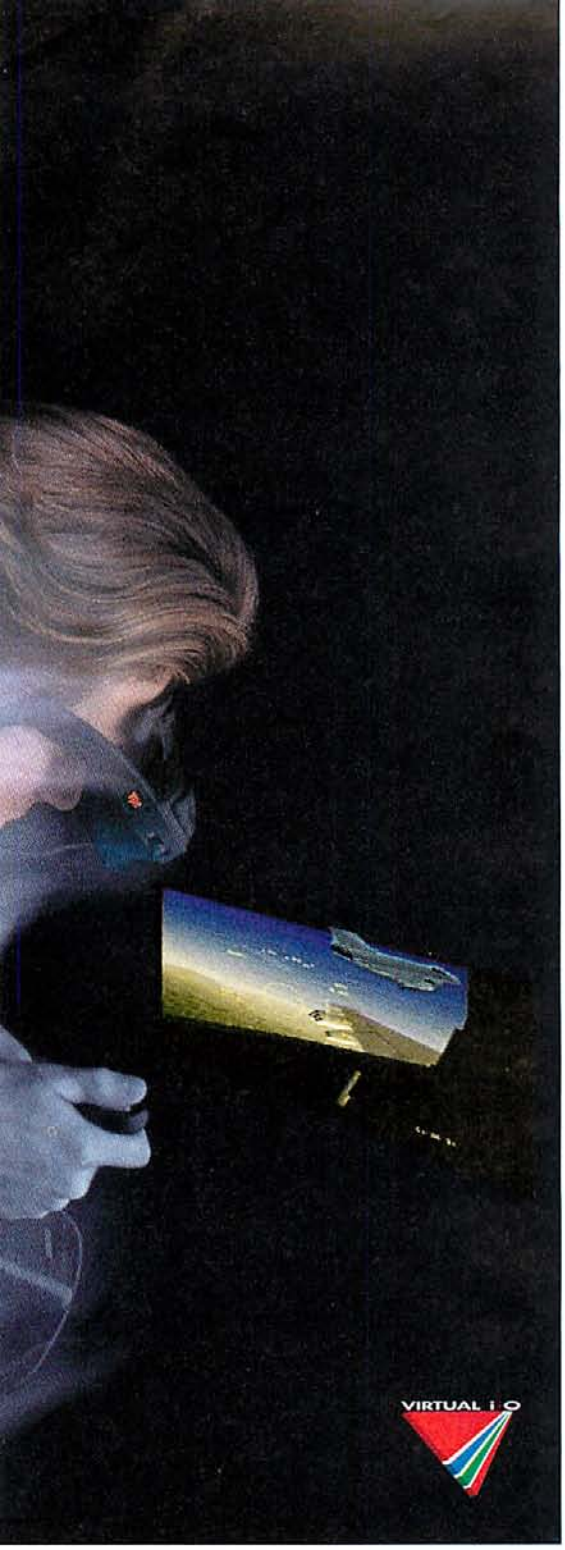




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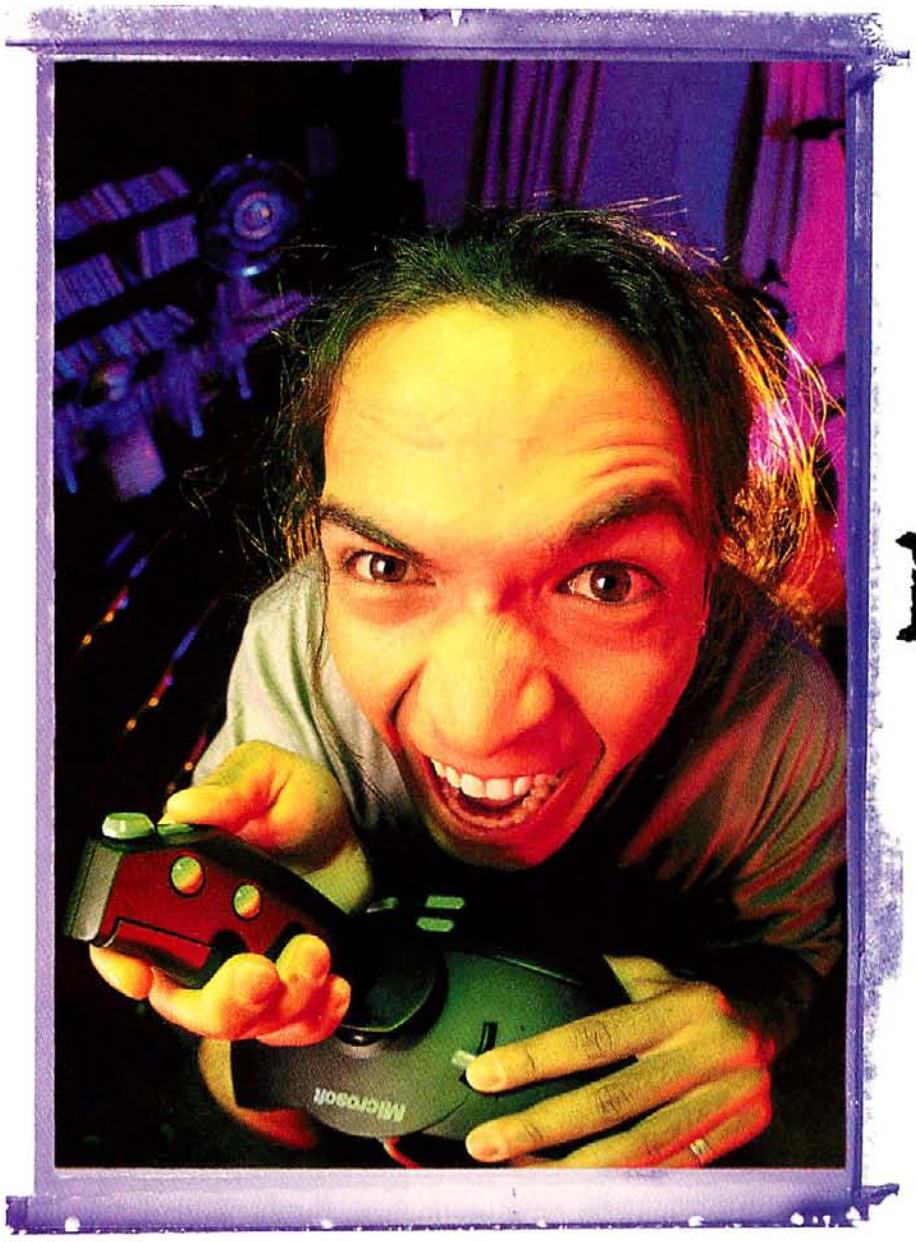
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CREDITS



At the ripe old age of 23, **Elliott Chin** is the junior member of the *CGW* staff—but we like it that way. With an abundance of energy and almost unerring gaming instinct, he assists the *CGW* greybeards by doing what they can't, like playing fighting games and opening child-proof containers. Elliott never thought that the countless hours he spent playing Civ and Empire would have paid off, but now he is *CGW*'s Strategy/Wargames Editor and PlayStation specialist. A "gamer-of-all-trades," Elliott relaxes by badgering troops in strategy games, pulverizing enemies in space combat sims, or beating up the reflex-challenged in his favorite fighting games. Of course, all play and no work would make Elliott an extremely happy person, so the senior editorial staff pays close attention to his workload, and then triples it. His non-gaming hobbies include building an impressive Lego armada that will one day rule the New World.



Peter Olafson is a veteran gamer and long-time contributor to *CGW*. The former games editor of the late Amiga World, Peter secretly harbors five Amigas in hallowed shrines throughout his home. Married to New York Times columnist Evelyn Nieves, he is currently working on two teleplays and is the author of Final Fantasy III and Thunderscape strategy guides. Beginning this month, he takes over as the new action-games columnist, donning the crimson robe of the High Priest of Action. In addition, Peter researched and wrote most of the material for this month's Sony PlayStation supplement.



Gordon Goble, a confessed sports junkie, is also an aficionado of reflex-testing simulations of all kinds. When he's not cruisin' the Net to get scoring updates for his hockey pool, Gordon is busy hot-wiring his Pentium to run the latest racing simulators and sports games. Formerly an agent for a professional auto racing team, he now runs his own one-man desktop publishing business in Vancouver, B.C. First turned on to computer racing with Indianapolis 500, Gordon continues to seek substance over style in his pursuit of the ultimate digital sports experience. If it weren't for Papyrus, Electronic Arts and MicroProse, he would probably be spending all of his free time at the tennis courts or gym.



Scott A. May has surfed the electronic gaming wave since the early '80s, playing on such diverse platforms as the IntelliVision, Commodore 64, Amiga, Genesis, Nintendo and IBM compatibles. To support his electronic-gaming addiction, Scott resorted to lengthy writing sentences at *Commodore*, *Compute*, *VideoGames* and *SMART* magazines, and has penned two weekly newspaper columns for nearly 10 years. But despite his efforts in the 12-step rehabilitation program, Scott has been unsuccessful in breaking his computer habit. Now, determined to help others, Scott works as a computer consultant and a business software instructor. When not working or foraging for tubers, legumes and tofu, Scott enjoys painting, music and serial monogamy.



Petra Schlunk avoided her graduate studies by playing computer games; primarily, role-playing games where she slipped into an alter ego, then blamed that same ego for eating her homework. Petra also enjoys strategy games; which may explain why she attends board-, card- and computer-game conventions in L.A. She considers herself a hobby author, having written several articles for *CGW* and *The Electronic Roadhouse*, as well as authoring strategy guides for King's Quest VII and Master of Magic. Along with her husband, former *CGW* Wargames Contributing Editor Alan Emrich, Petra is busy raising their daughter, Avalon. But she still seeks that all-immersive magical interlude of a small, intricate game world where she can escape for a time. In other words, the girl just wants to have fun.

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PUBLISHER
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Managing Editor	Ken Brown
Features Editor	Denny Atkin
Reviews Editor	Terry Coleman
Technical Editor	Dave Salvator
Associate Editor, News	Jill M. Anderson
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	Peter Olafson (Action Games)
	Paul Schuytema (Game Design)
Founder	Russell Sipe

DESIGN

Art Director	Edwin C. Malstrom
Graphic Artist	Jack Rodrigues

PRODUCTION

Production Manager	Steve Spingola
Production Coordinator	Martin Walthall

HOW TO CONTACT THE EDITORS

Address questions and feedback to CG Editorial, 135 Main St., 14th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105. Or you may contact us via:

Phone: (415) 357-4900
Editorial Fax: (415) 357-4977
CompuServe: (76703,622)
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Internet: 76703.622@compuserve.com
Web site: http://www.zd.com/~gaming

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Advertising Director
Lee Uniacke (415) 357-4915

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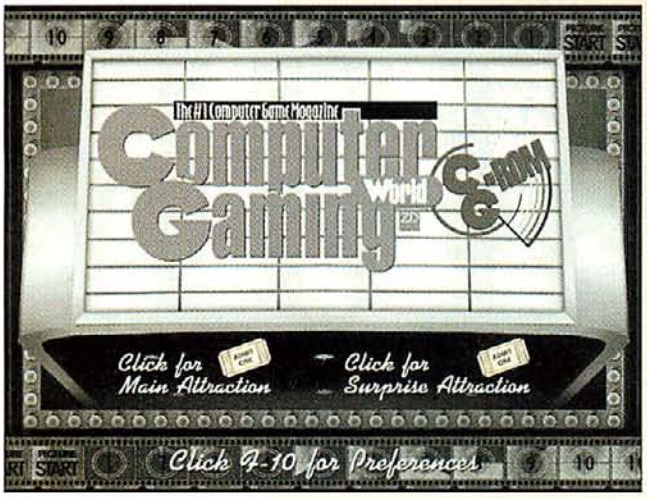
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These are answers to questions we frequently hear from our readers. Unfortunately, we are not able to answer the question, "Why doesn't the $#&*!! CD-ROM work on my computer?" because we don't approve of language like "$#&*!!"



What's On The CD?

Exclusives, exclusives, exclusives. This month we have three of them, plus the Su-27 mission missing from our March CD. First up, this month's CG-ROM theme is Film Noir. Today, game designers have expanded their gaming venues back to the age of grainy, black-and-white films, which depicted a dark and gritty world, populated with cold truths, hard facts and vile gangsters. Cyberdreams pulled all the stops to give us an early exclusive demo of its game, Noir. The complete, fully-interactive game, filmed at various locations with live actors, is expected to be released by this fall. Next, the Not-Ready-For-Multimedia-Players (read: *CGW* staff) bring you our lighthearted parody of the genre in: Primary Blunders, where you can find the complete, un-cropped pictures of Cyberdreams' I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream, as well as the Missing Su-27 Flanker Mission. When you're finished flying and fighting, it's frag time. Strap on the first level of Duke Nukem 3-D and kick some alien can in this FormGen/3D Realms demo created exclusively for CGW.



In addition to our Duke Nukem demo, you'll also find two more Editors' Hot Picks: Sierra's Space Bucks and I-Motion's Virtual Chess. Other demos this month include Allied General, Earthworm Jim, Conquest of the New World, Descent II, Renegade Return and Fantasy General—a *CGW* nominee for best Strategy Game of the Year.

How Do I Use It?

Our CD is a Windows program. If you have Windows 95, installation is simple-the CD is Autoplay enabled. Just "Lock 'n' load." Otherwise, from Windows 3.x, pop the CD into your drive, select RUN from the Program Manager's menu and type D:\RUN-ME (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD, just type D:\INSTALL to create a *CGW* program group on your Windows desktop. If you have installed previous versions of the CG-ROM, this disk will use the program group already on your desktop. You navigate by pointing and clicking just as you would in any other Windows program. You can access any of the "Main Attraction" items (such as Product Demos or Patches) from within the Primary Blunders "Surprise Attraction." And you may exit the "Surprise Attraction" at any time by first clicking on the "Back" button, then clicking on the "Home" button.

How Do I Access The Demos?

To view the demos, click on EDITORS' HOT PICKS or PRODUCT DEMOS to view the selection. Next, click on your favorite genre: Action, Adventure/Role Playing or Strategy/Wargames, then click on the title of your interest. Each demo has instructions for its installation.

How Do I Get The Patch Files?

Click on PATCHES under the CGW FEATURES, then read the text window with instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. You can also access the patches from your DOS prompt by typing D:\PATCHES (where D: is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) and copy them directly from there to your hard drive.

How Do I Get The CG-ROM?

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How Do We Classify Games?

Action/Arcade (AC): The emphasis is on hand-eye coordination and reflexes, usually emphasizing fast play over story or strategy.

Adventure (AD): Games wherein you control an alter ego and move through a storyline or sequence of events, where puzzle-solving takes precedence over conversation and combat.

Classics/Puzzles (CP): Classics are old stand-bys and parlor games that appeal to many different types of gamer. Examples include: backgammon, bridge, chess, MONOPOLY, parchesi, RISK, and SOLITAIRE. Puzzle games are computer games which emphasize spatial relationships, word games and/or problem-solving without requiring gamers to follow a storyline. Examples would be: SHANGHAI, TETRIS and ZIG-ZAG.

Role-Playing (RP): RPGs are a subset of adventure games, but stress character development, often through improving stats or other attributes. Conversations with non-player characters (NPCs) and tactical combat are generally more important than in Adventure games. Finally, the game world tends to be large, and the plot less linear, often with some quests/treks outside the main storyline.

Simulations (SI): Highly realistic games from a first-person perspective: you may drive a realistically simulated race car, fly a military aircraft with a meticulous physics model, or swoop through a detailed sci-fi environment. Usually polygon-filled technology is used to build the simulated world on the fly.

Sports (SP): The sports game category is a broad genre which includes action (NBA Live) and strategy games (FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO) based on sports.

Strategy (ST): Problem-solving, short- and long-range planning are the keys here. These games almost always emphasize resource and risk management. This genre includes conflict-based sci-fi and fantasy games (X-COM, OUTPOST, MOO), as well as "pure" strategy games and "software toys" such as SIMCITY.

Wargames (WG): A subset of strategy games, these recreate historical conflicts from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational, or strategic, and stress anything from logistics and firepower to morale and leadership. They may be simple (PANZER GENERAL, EMPIRE II) to incredibly detailed and complex (PACIFIC WAR).

HOW DO WE RATE?



Outstanding: The rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, and gameplay come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience. Our strongest buying recommendation.



Very Good: A high-quality game that succeeds in many areas. May have minor problems, but is still worth your time and money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter or genre.



Average: A mixed bag. Can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in significant areas. Can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.

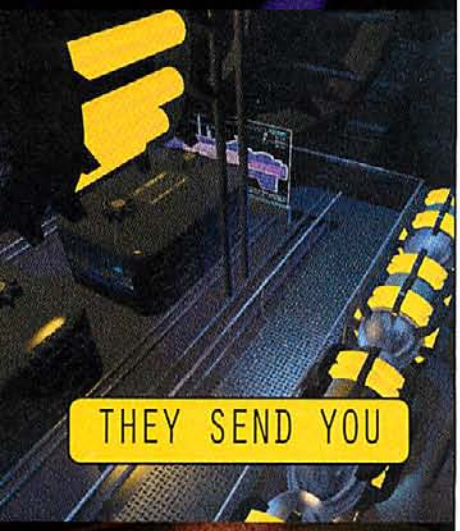


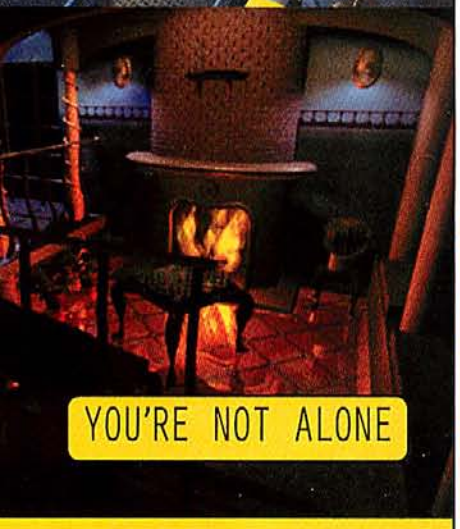
Weak: A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly-conceived game design—and you will want to think long and hard before buying it.



Abysmal: The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, incomplete or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released.







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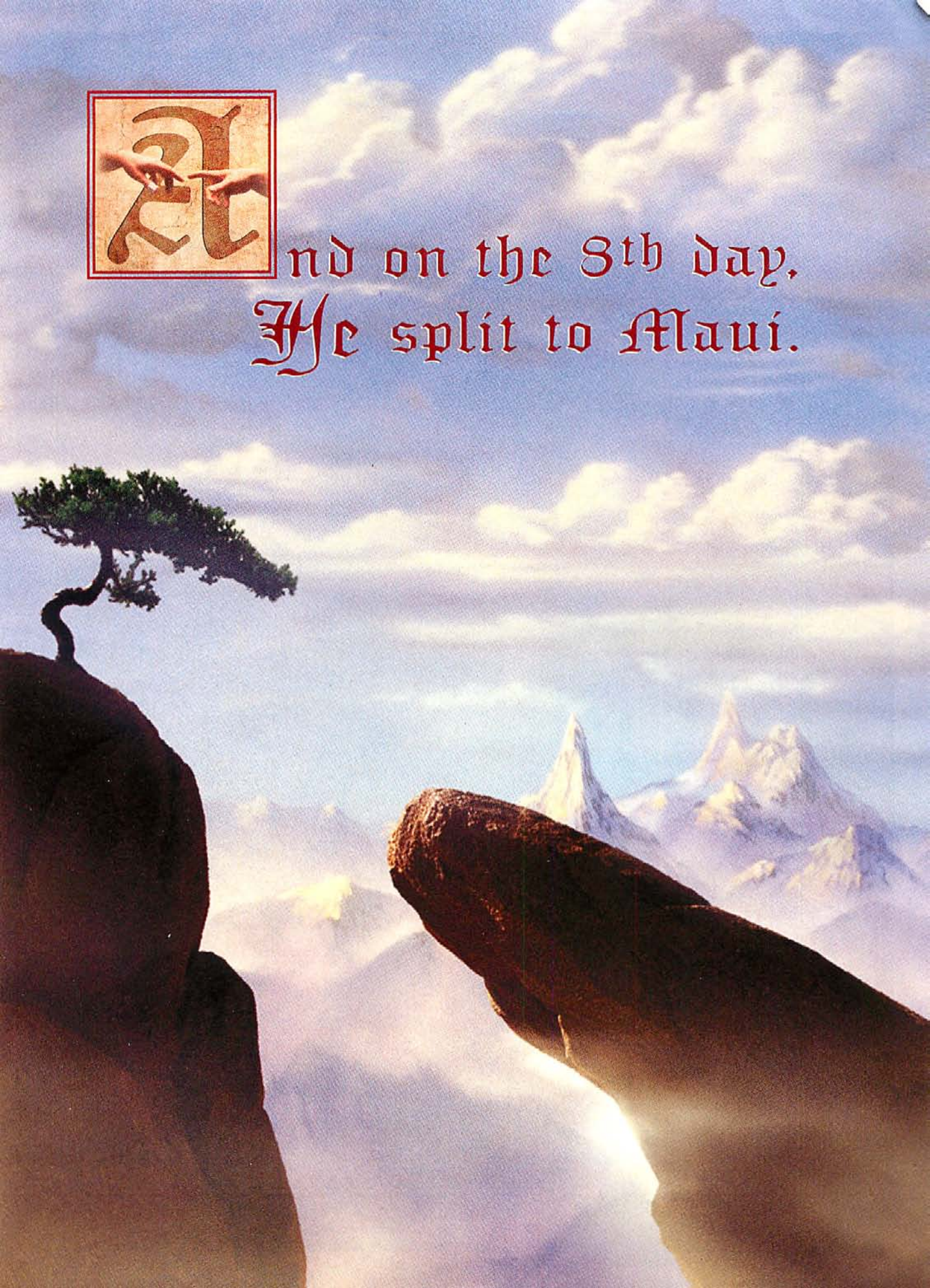


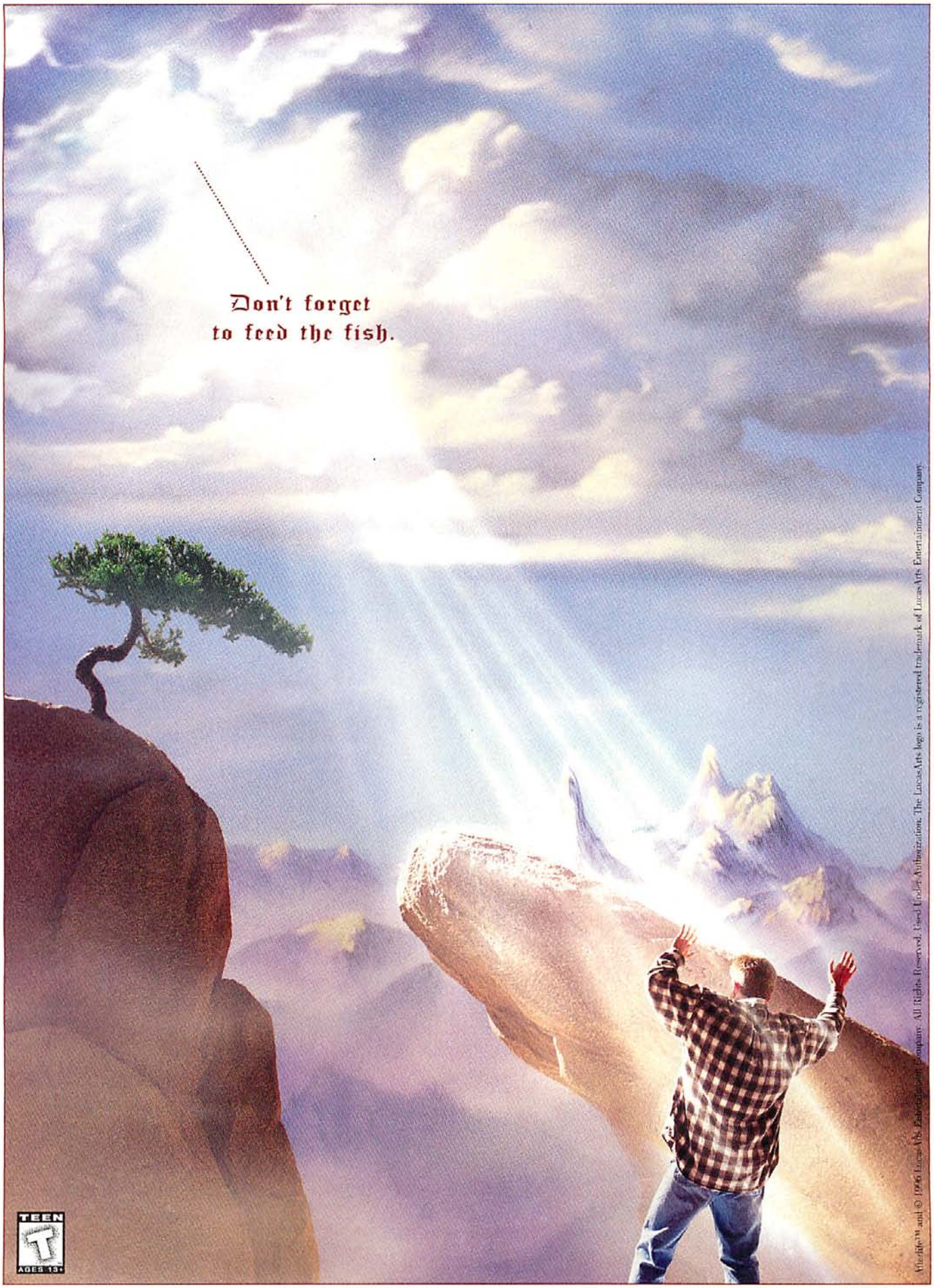
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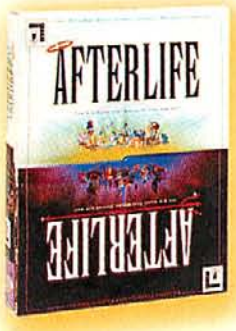

And on the 8th day,
He split to Maui.


Don't forget
to feed the fish.
TEEN
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AGES 13+
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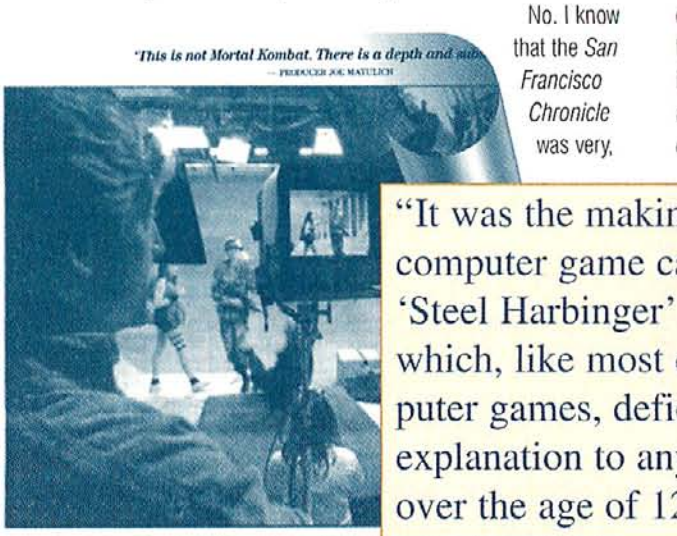
More Ammo For Computer Gamers Dealing With Media Misinformation



There it was in black and white. It was featured front page, second section in The *San Francisco Chronicle*, a metropolitan daily that should have known better. They've been following the technology beat long enough to know the difference between a computer game and a video game. Yet, there was the headline indicating that violence would play a major role in a "computer game" for children. Worse, two paragraphs into the article, the author stated that the game's premise was like most computer game design—impossible to comprehend by anyone over the age of 12. Even worse, if a reader bothered to slog through the entire story, move past the page turn and reach the end, he or she would discover that the article wasn't about a computer game at all. It was about a video game.

"Live-action sequences part of computer game designed for children"

It's hard to believe editors at the *San Francisco Chronicle* would be so ignorant with their coverage. One wouldn't have to do much research to find out that there are plenty of people over the age of 12 who understand computer games, since the average game buyer is 30-31 years old. Not only that, but the average subscriber to *Computer Gaming World* is 35 years old. I'd hate to think that all of you above the age of 12 don't understand what we're writing about. Indeed, since all of us on the editorial staff are above the age of 12, I'd hate to think that *we* don't know what we're talking about.



"This is not Mortal Kombat. There is a depth and sub
— PRODUCER JOE MATULICH

Computer-game makers in Corte Madera film actors for scenes in its 'Steel Harbinger' computer game, comi

Real Actors Star in Fantasy Cyber-W

Live-action sequences part of computer game designed for children

By Steve Rubenstein
Chronicle Staff Writer

On a quiet street in Corte Madera, aliens with glowing red eyeballs have been trying to take over the world.

This is serious business.

"We're dealing with a lot of metaphors here," said Joe Matulich, in charge of the operation. "This is not Mortal Kombat. There is a depth and substance."

There was so much depth and substance and plastic machine guns inside the small movie studio across the street from the Department of Motor Vehicles that it was hard to figure out exactly what was going on. It was the making of a computer game called "Steel Harbinger" which, like most computer games, defies explanation to anyone over the age of 12.

A few dozen movie and computer whizzes were filming the live-action sequences that will be part of the game, due out this summer. It seems to involve an alien woman with an oversized head, storm troopers in green armor, a mad scientist, a secret laboratory in Antarctica and lots of guns.

"I've died five times before lunch," said Dan DeForest, one of the storm troopers. "It's not hard to die. If the director tells you to die, you die. That's acting."

These days, the hottest computer games contain filmed scenes with human actors. The filmed scenes help tell the meaningful part that, more and more, accompanies the bang-bang-bang part of co... There is nothing new about ... movies or aliens attempting ... world, but there is something ... about name actors filming sh... whose primary purpose is to be ... cest kid with a computer contro... up points on a video screen.

One of the actors is Eddie Albert ... was playing the part of the mad scie... was his job to look into the camera an... things like, "It's seemingly organic wi... kind of metallic superstructure," withe... smiling.

Saving the world is hard work, said Al... bert, especially on a computer game. Albert has never played a computer game and does not like them. He is trying to go beyond com...

COMPUTER: *Page A13 Col. 1*

"It was the making of a computer game called 'Steel Harbinger' which, like most computer games, defies explanation to anyone over the age of 12."

Play is not childishness. Play is not foolishness. Play is not necessarily frivolous, though it can be. Indeed, play is not even necessarily dangerous, though it can be. Play is preparation for life. The reason play is often considered childish is because children play. This, however, requires one to commit the common fallacy of hasty generalization. Children play. Games very wrong. We have ample research to disprove this ignorant assertion. However, the Chron's sloppy "journalism" is such an endemic error of faux sophistication, such a *tres chic* fallacy, that it's once again time for our semi-annual sermon on why it's not only *okay* for adults to play, but necessary. Those of you who've previously attended these Gamers' Liberation Movement rallies via my editorials can be excused. Of course, we could use a few hundred thousand of you in the choir.

No. I know that the *San Francisco Chronicle* was very,

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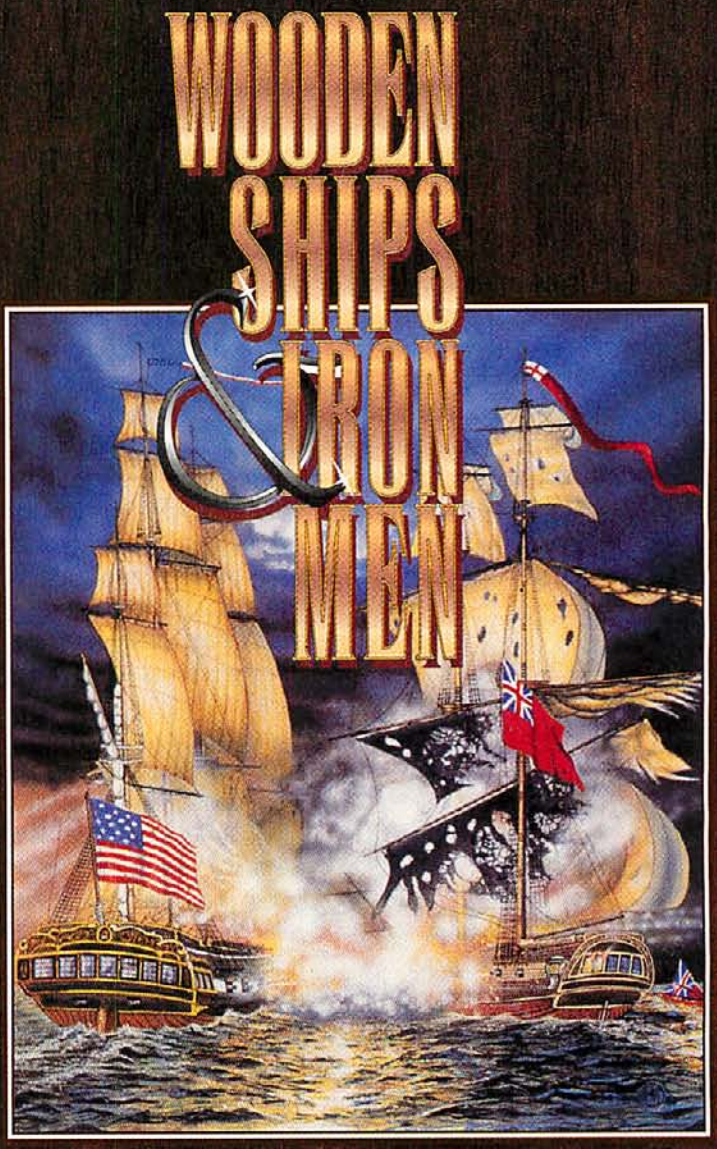
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are play. Therefore, games are for children. That's the equivalent of saying that all Germans are Nazis, all Irishmen are terrorists, and all editors are arrogant.

Children play to try on roles, to imagine possibilities, to experience the exhilaration of competition and its consummate reward of success. The same is true with all of life. Professional writers play with words; professional businessmen play with business plans; professional soldiers play with simulations; and professional artists play with stone, paint, clay and junk. Prior to presidential debates and news conferences, I am told that it is standard procedure to role-play the event. Prior to my one and only network television appearance, I role-played several scenarios with a professional public relations consultant. To repeat—play helps us *prepare* for life. By playing, all of these professionals prepared better for an upcoming experience.

> **"Those who are afraid to play are people who are afraid to grow."**

Of course, someone will suggest that playing DOOM death matches or solving MYST doesn't prepare one for life. This straw someone might even go on to state that the examples above are "reality-based" play and therefore, subject to special case consideration. SimCity is okay by this logic because it reflects real lessons in urban planning, but Accolade's upcoming Deadlock isn't because it reflects a fictitious situation. Hogwash! Most games require anticipation of obstacles (whether it's Sonic hopping over a monster or Duke Nukem crouching down to peer around a corner), resource management (whether money, armor-piercing shells, or magical spells) and overall strategy (the mental map to get to the goal).

In order to be applicable to real-life, the lessons of play must be "interpreted" by the gamer. Sometimes, this interpretation will be subconscious and the gamer improves his/her perspective/skill set without knowing it. Sometimes, this interpretation takes a conscious leap. Whether one is a Freudian who believes a healthy mind requires "reality-testing" (play is essentially testing possibilities without final consequences) or a Jungian who believes that "phantasy" is required to reach the imagination and inspire interpretation, play is tremendously important—especially for people who are willing to change and grow.

Jung understood why people resist play. According to George B. Hogenson (*Jung's Struggle With Freud*, p. 138), Jung maintained that "It is phantasy that makes interpretation possible, and the activity by which phantasy works out its various interpretations is play." Jung went on to suggest that most people, being in the grip of orthodoxy, are not willing to open up their field of experience to the emergence of the opposites from the unconscious. In other words, play is threatening to people who are not mature enough to want to learn more about themselves.

So, the next time someone bashes you about your "childish" hobby, ask them what they're afraid of. Those who are afraid to play are people who are afraid to grow, to change, to *be*—even if they write for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Silly writer, games *aren't* just for kids.

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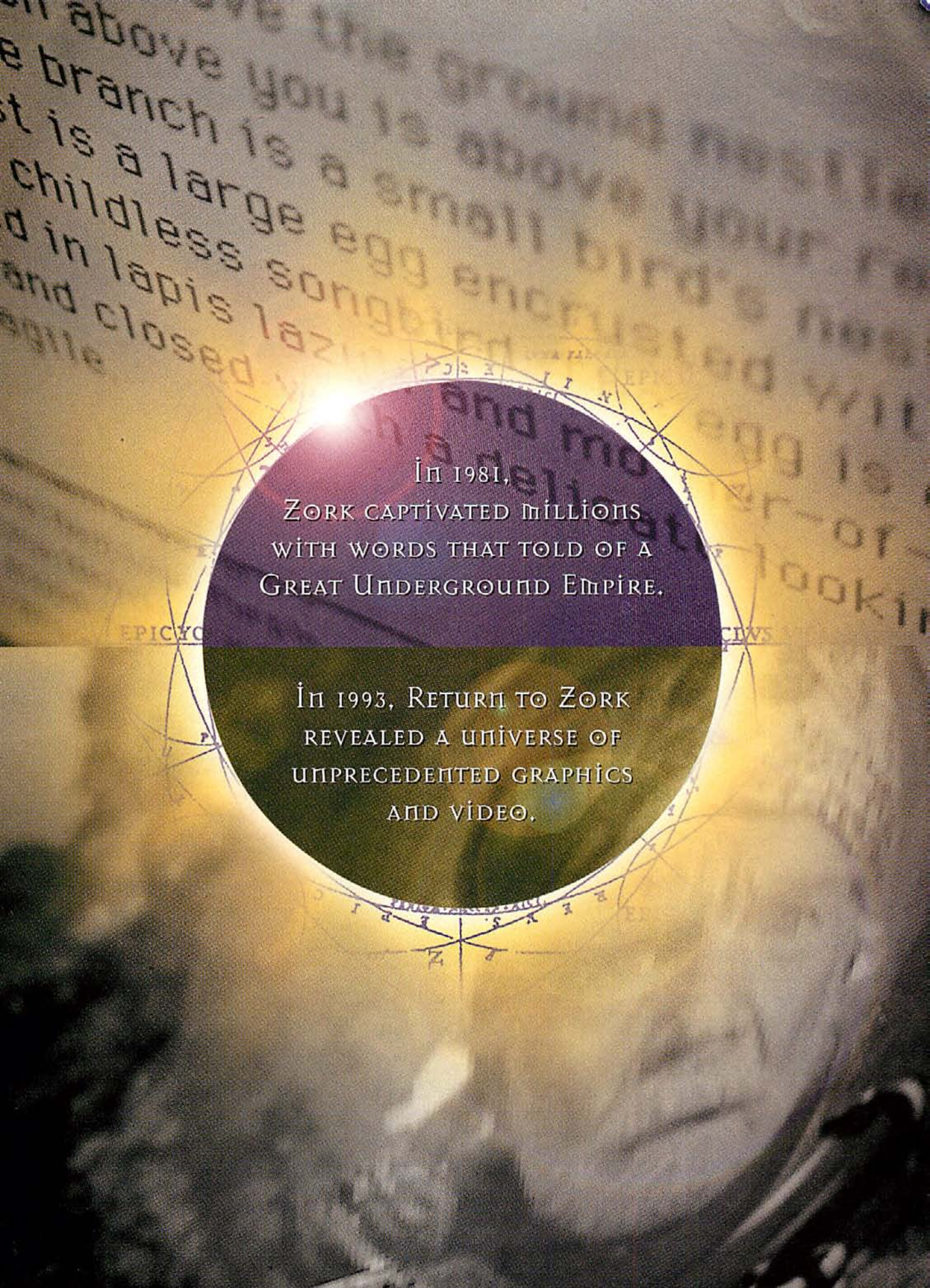
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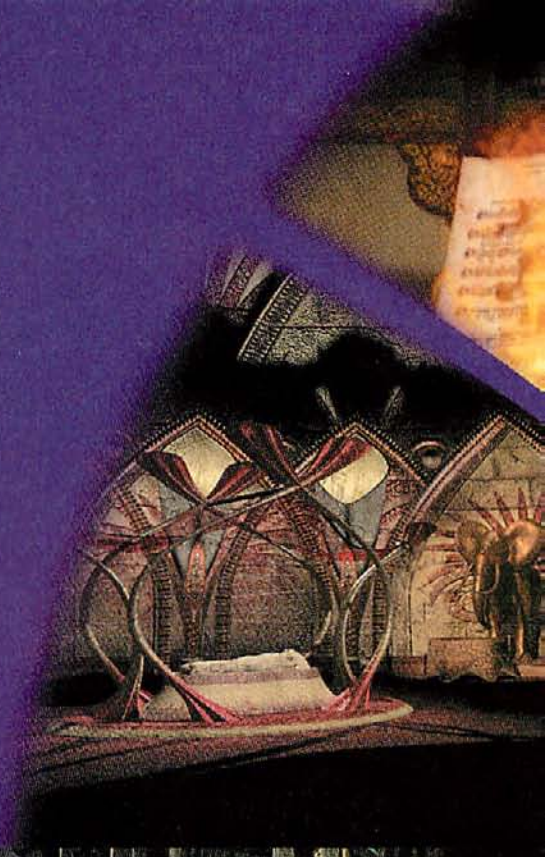
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

THE MERRY PRANKSTERS

Perhaps it is a comment on the broader, fanciful aspects of our hobby and avocation that it took me all the way to the bottom of the "article" in the READ.ME section of the April issue to realize I had been had. We have come to expect so much from the folks that feed our addiction to this sort of escapist entertainment. Bigger, Better, Faster, More seems to be the catch phrase of this industry so much so that even absurdist parody takes a while to sink in!

Either that or I am more gullible than I thought. But as I sit here pulling the fish hook out of my cheek, saving myself at the last minute from being pulled into your clever boat, I console myself with the idea that April Fools jokes that cannot by reason of a set schedule be delivered on the actual day have a better chance of success.

Enjoy your day and thanks for a great publication that just keeps getting better.

Gerry Palmer via AOL
St. Louis, MO



APOLLO FOOLS You did know that whole business about real spaceships in WING COMMANDER V was an April Fools joke, didn't you?

ROBBY DOES WINDOWS

I read with some interest your article on Plug N Play, where those who want to play DOS games are going to have problems. Sure made me change my mind about PNP Soundblaster cards. But this is not the end of the story.

After deciding that it might be unwise financially to upgrade my system, I found a buyer for my old computer and ordered a P150 from Micron. It arrived and started up into Windows 95 just fine. I began loading my Windows games, and everything worked fine. Then, I loaded Caesar II. I inserted this Autoplay CD ROM game. It said we were going to MS DOS mode. Imagine my surprise when it said it couldn't find a CD-ROM drive. I went out to DOS, and guess what, neither could MS DOS 7. I tried another CD-ROM game in DOS. Then, I called Micron. They were very nice to tell me that the OEM version of Windows 95 now being shipped by Microsoft doesn't have any mouse driver for MS DOS 7, and the CD ROM drivers are hidden. Well, fortunately, I still had my old machine. I copied the MS Mouse drivers, put them into my machine, and put the command in my Autoexec.BAT (just like the old days, huh?). After a bit of exploration, Micron also helped me get the CD ROM drivers into the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files. Will most new computer buyers be able to figure this out? What will they do with their new machine if they can't play [a DOS game]? I wonder if the folks up in the Pacific Northwest told the game developers about this. I wonder if the folks at the Justice Department would consider this restraint of trade (maybe FURY3 isn't selling so well?). In any event, let the buyer beware... MS doesn't want anyone using anything but Windows 95, and they are looking for every angle to make it so.

Robby Robertson
Lakewood CO

We don't know about the conspiracy you suggest, but we're sure that sharing your experience will probably save some new Micron owner some anxious moments. Now, you're an "information provider" for some of that good information you like to see in our magazine. Guess we'll have to send you a "Pundits Club" membership card in the mail.

LOSING AT KENO

Me and my gaming friends disagree with you (sic) Quote "they though (sic) the software industary (sic) was the same as the toy industry, forgetting the most vital market statistic—Computer gamres (sic) are adults." I believe that this is an incorrect statistic and should be corrected in your next eddition (sic) of *Computer Gaming World*.

Thanx,

KENO
via the Internet

An independent survey of game buyers in October of 1995 indicated that the average age of game buyers is 31 years of age. This is in line with other surveys, most notably the annual consumer survey of the Software Publishers Association. You and your friends may "though" otherwise, but it won't change the facts.

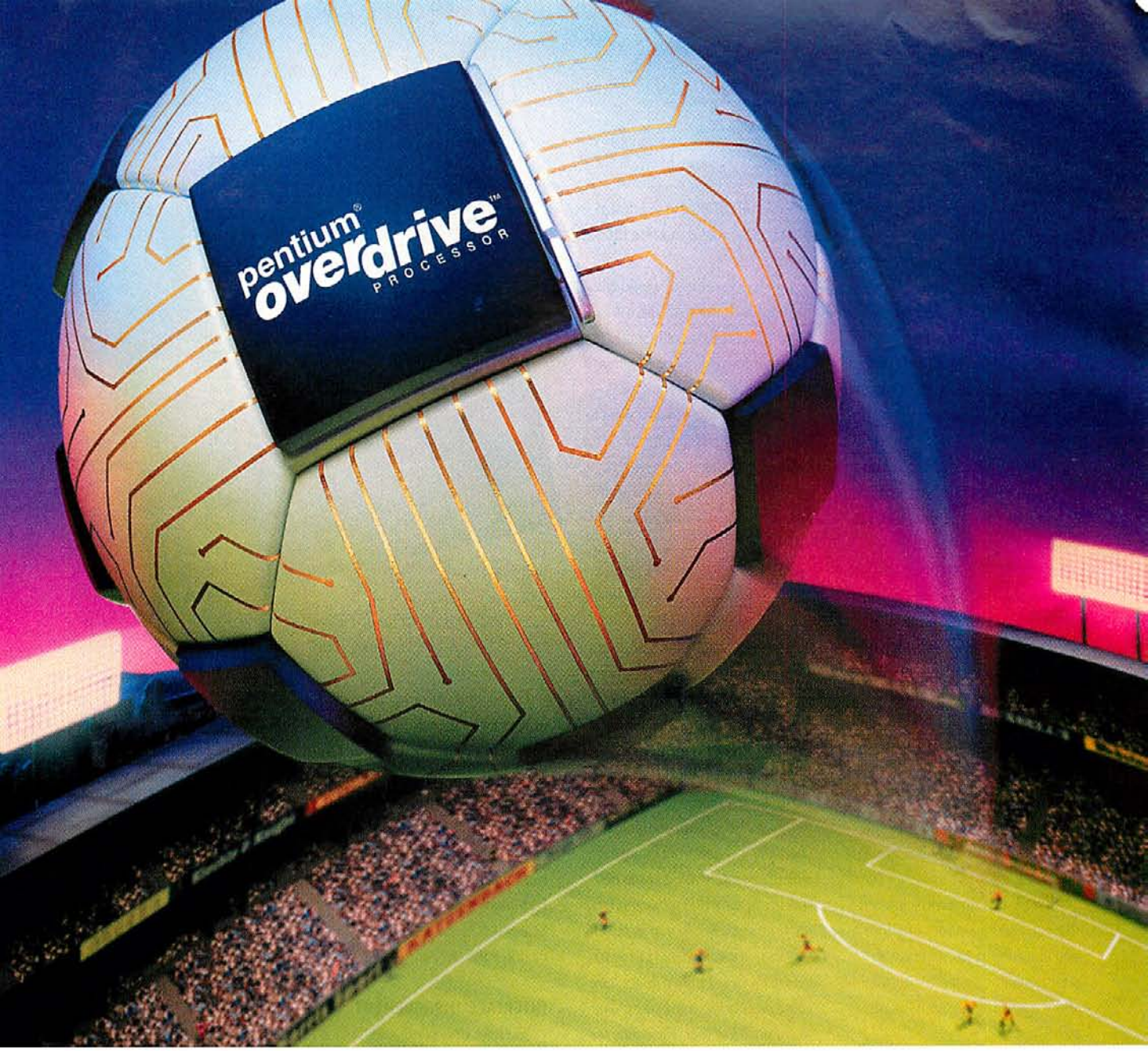
THE CASE OF THE MISSING PERFORMANCE

Your magazine is one of the best. Period. I've never been disappointed. I wrote this letter to especially thank Loyd Case for his insightful and extremely helpful tip in your March issue. In his column, he gave a tip on how to make Windows 95's refresh rate and graphics run faster and smoother. His comments hit a bullseye! I thought that my slow refresh rate could be contributed to one of those "Windows 95 things" (you know what I'm talking about). I decided to give his suggestion a try. Boy, did it work! Windows 95 works much better now. Kudos to Mr. Case!

Betsy Huey
Ruston, LA

THIS MUST BE MAGIC

I offer this letter as a means of expressing the frustration that MicroProse has placed on us MAGIC: THE GATHERING players, as well as giving your readers a place to find out a lot of information about this game. Ever since I first read your article on this game (June, 1995), I've not only followed this game, but I also started



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reading your magazine monthly. Now that your February issue's Pipeline states that the game will be pushed back until Summer '96, I feel that I have to find a way to express my anger and frustration. My questions to MicroProse remain unanswered, and I feel that I must to turn to the print media to be recognized.

As you well know, there are hundreds of thousands (maybe millions) of Magic players out there that can do nothing but play this game. When we first heard that a computer version would be released we immediately became excited. After all, now we can play without having to find a bunch of friends at one o'clock in the morning. When I heard that MicroProse was making the game, I thought, "Well, OK. It *could* be worse." Well, I've been waiting for nearly a year now for this game to be released and they still have nothing to show for it, and I'm disgusted.

I have taken upon myself to sift through various sources of information and rumors to create a web page containing a lot of information about this game. You can find the page at http://www.en.com/users/ctown/magic2.html. Once MicroProse actually did reply to one of my e-mails, but they would disclose nothing.

I hope that MicroProse realizes that putting this game at the bottom of their priority list after putting so much hype into it is severely hurting their company's image in the eyes of many Magic players. I, for one, realize the incredible task it would be to program the game would take a very long time and understand the delays. What I don't understand is why they refuse to release any information about the game except that it will be Win95 and that Sid Meier will work on it. I don't know how big of a role he will play in the design, but I believe that is mostly a PR move.

I wish [MicroProse] would take the approach Interplay did with STONEKEEP and keep their customers informed on the progress of the game. As of right now, we haven't got a clue. Finally I want to thank *Computer Gaming World* for creating and maintaining such a great magazine which is the source for a lot of the information on my web page.

William R. Brickles III
via the Internet

As we reported in the Sightings section of the April issue, Sid Meier is actually doing a lot of the coding for MAGIC: THE GATHERING. *So, it's not just a matter of PR in this case. Also, Sid has changed the AI since we saw the game last year so that it is no longer deck-based. In addition, your character will now walk through a typical adventure/role-playing perspective of the world rather than moving from static hot spot to static hot spot as we described it in last year's Sneak Preview. Further, things have changed considerably in the online world since last year. The online service where the head-to-head game was to have debuted is no longer as viable for a product of this magnitude as it once was, and plans are changing to reflect the changes in the online world. We'll try to keep you up to date.*

SCREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The "Burning Rubber" feature (February, 1996) was great, but I think there was a mistake about SCREAMER. You said that there were only three tracks. If you play the championship, you will see that there are six. And, after you win them all, you will be able to practice with these tracks and you can race them backwards, too.

Luiz Eduardo Ribeiro
Sao Paulo, Brazil

For pointing out our error, you've won a free trip to our CG News Bureau in Bosnia-Herzogovina. That's where we've sent all the other letter writers who've caught us with our fonts down. You're absolutely right. The feature, which covered several similar games, made this error. Fortunately, the full review of SCREAMER *in our March issue made mention of all six courses.*

INTERFACE IMPROVEMENT

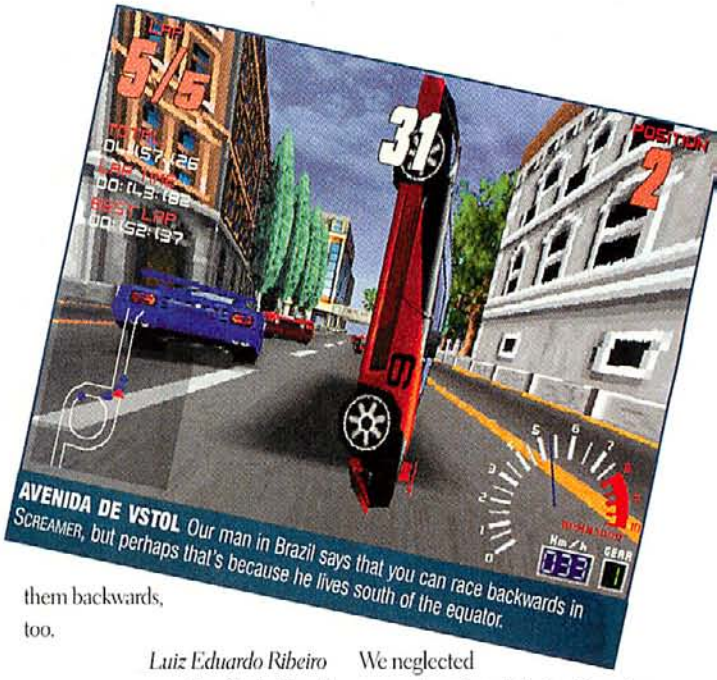
You have done a magnificent job redesigning your magazine! The new format is simply great. I have been a subscriber for several years, and have seen CGW change in many ways to provide a better reader "interface." Through all of these changes, CGW has continued to provide only the best reviews and information. Keep up the great work. I plan on being a subscriber for a long time. Thanks.

Joe Boza

CORRECTIONS

In our April review of the Zephyr Onyx, we compared the machine's WinBench CPUMark numbers with Falcon Northwest's Mach V system. We neglected to mention that while the Onyx has a 166 MHz CPU, the Mach V's runs at 133 MHz. Naturally, we'd expect to see better CPU numbers from the Onyx, which we did. Falcon Northwest is now shipping a 166 MHz rig that we'll be reviewing soon. We'll compare its numbers to the Onyx, and let you know what we find.

In our March review of TERMINATOR: FUTURE SHOCK, we incorrectly identified Kaare Siesing as the game's designer. Robert Stoll actually designed the game; Kaare Siesing was the project manager and the architect of Bethesda's X(n)gine. We apologize for the error, and hope that Mr. Stoll won't terminate us.



AVENIDA DE VSTOL Our man in Brazil says that you can race backwards in SCREAMER, but perhaps that's because he lives south of the equator.

HEY, YOUSE GUYS!

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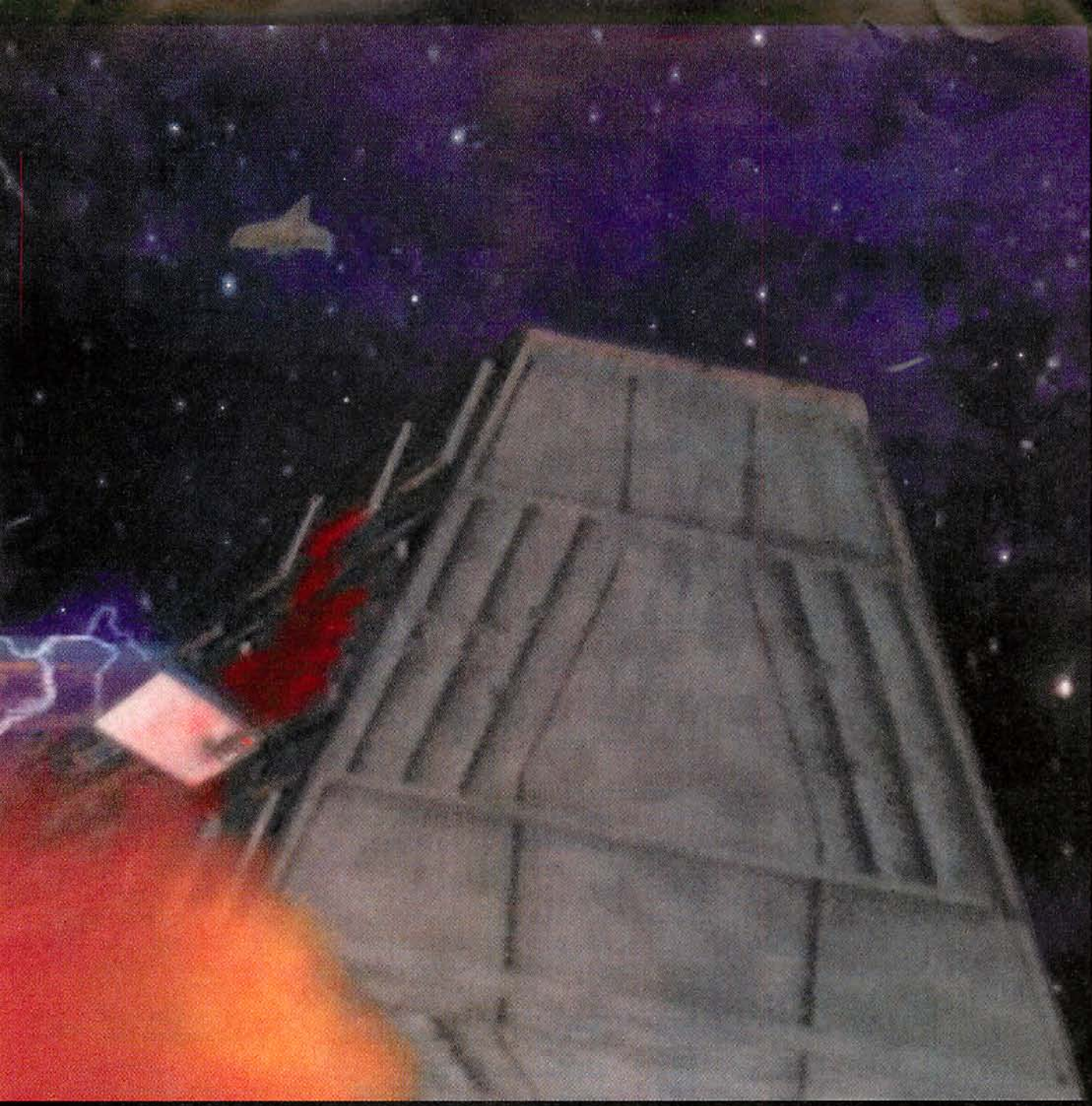
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Game of the Year Finalists Named

Premier Awards To Be Announced At The Electronic Entertainment Expo

The following games are finalists for the *CGW* Premier Awards, the magazine's awards for the best games of the year in each genre. The winners will be announced in May at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, and featured in the June issue of *CGW*. Due to holiday marketing and inevitable product release delays, our award year spans from March 31 to March 31.

This year, *CGW* adds two new categories to our list of Premier Awards: Classics/Puzzles and Space Sims. In addition to a winner in each genre, there is an overall Game of the Year and three special awards. The finalists in each category are as follows:

In the Action category the nominees are: CRUSADER: NO REMORSE (EA/Origin), DARK FORCES (LucasArts), HEXEN (id/Raven) and THE NEED FOR SPEED (EA/Bullfrog).

In the Adventure genre, the finalists are: CHRONOMASTER (Capstone), GABRIEL KNIGHT II: THE BEAST WITHIN (Sierra), I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM (MGM/Cyberdreams), RIDDLE OF MASTER LU (Sanctuary Woods), and STARTREK: THE NEXT GENERATION (Spectrum HoloByte).

Our first new category is Classics/Puzzles, with this year's finalists being: CONNECTIONS (Discovery), MONOPOLY (Parker Bros./Virgin) and YOU DON'T KNOW JACK (Berkeley Systems).

Role-Playing was this year's weakest category with the fewest finalists. Only ANVIL OF DAWN (New World Computing) and STONEKEEP (Interplay) made the list.

Finalists for Simulation game of the year include: ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS (Electronic Arts), EF 2000 (Ocean), FIGHTER DUEL (Philips), INDYCAR 2 (Sierra/Papyrus), and SU-27 FLANKER (Mindscape/SSI).

The other new game category this year is Space Sims. Finalists for the Premier Award in this genre are: MECHWARRIOR 2 (Activision) and WING COMMANDER IV (EA/Origin).

Sports games were very hotly contested in the '95-'96 product year. Finalists for this Premier Award are: FRONT PAGE SPORTS PRO FOOTBALL '96 (Sierra/Dynamix), NBA LIVE (Electronic Arts), NHL HOCKEY 96 (Electronic Arts), PGA TOUR GOLF (Electronic Arts), TITLE FIGHT PRO BOXING (CompuSports), and TROPHY BASS (Sierra).

Premier finalists in the Strategy genre are: CAESAR II (Sierra/Impressions), COMMAND & CONQUER (Virgin/Westwood), FANTASY GENERAL (Mindscape/SSI), HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC (New World), WARCRAFT II (Davidson/Blizzard), and WARHAMMER: SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT (Mindscape).

For Wargame of the year, the finalists are: BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG (Talonsoft), CUSTER'S LAST COMMAND (Incredible Simulations), PANTHERS IN THE SHADOWS (HPS Simulations), RISE OF THE WEST (RAW Entertainment), and STEEL PANTHERS (Mindscape/SSI).

Finally, the three Special Awards to be announced at E3 will be for Hardware Achievement, Artistic Achievement for Physical Model, and for Technical Achievement.—*Johnny Wilson*

ON THE SHELF

Here's a quick look at the hottest products on store shelves, as well as the lukewarm ones that might sit around through the spring.

CIVILIZATION II

CG HOT

Friends, Romans, countrymen: lend me your PCs. Another bid for world conquest has begun anew, and this time, I am determined to see that our glorious empire does not fall. Lo, these many years, other nations have amassed sufficient wealth and prestige to be allowed entry into our esteemed arena. The Sioux tribe from North America, the Celts from the British Isles, the Japanese from the East Asian shores, and many others have convened on a new battleground for world domination. The scientists are once again at research, and their discoveries put their previous exploits to shame. The builders of yore have returned, bringing with them new



Intel Packs 'em In

MMX Technology Promises Faster Multimedia Performance

At the recent InterMedia show in San Francisco, Intel unveiled its new MMX technology, a multimedia extension to the X86 instruction set. MMX's 57 new CPU opcodes are designed to accelerate the most commonly-performed multimedia operations, including AVI and MPEG decoding, graphics filtering, 3-D graphics and varied audio tasks. Intel claims performance gains ranging from 40 to 400 percent depending on the operation.

Unlike the bungled NSP initiative of a year ago, where Intel posited that it could bring all the multimedia operations "home" to the host, Intel is positioning the MMX as a "cooperative" technology that works with fixed-function chips like graphics accelerators and audio DSPs (Digital Signal Processors). Creative Labs, Yamaha and S3, among other independent hardware vendors, have rallied behind Intel, which also has received support from many big-name, independent software vendors such as Adobe, Macromedia and Microsoft.

Microsoft plans to tweak its DirectX APIs to use the MMX technology whenever possible by passing any functions a task-specific chip cannot perform directly to the CPU via DirectX's hardware abstraction layer (HAL). Because MMX promises to efficiently handle tasks such as assisting with rendering, filtering, and video decompression, the CPU will be able to focus more on processor-intensive tasks (such as AI), ultimately creating a smoother gaming environment.

MMX uses 64-bit "packed" integer data types, taking 8-, 16- and 32-bit data and putting 8, 4, or 2 of these into the MMX registers for processing with a technique called Single Instruction Multiple Data (SIMD). Data packing greatly accelerates such functions as inverse discrete cosine transforms—the key algorithm to smooth MPEG decompression.

Intel expects to introduce its MMX-equipped CPUs later this year and integrate MMX into all of its processors by sometime next year.
—Dave Salvator

PLAYING LATELY?

READERS' TOP 10

WING COMMANDER IV makes a strong debut at number four, while ALLIED GENERAL also cracks the Top 10 most-played list. Three other games return to the chart after a month's absence, including PANZER GENERAL, still going strong after 15 months. Be sure to send in your free feedback card, so we know which companies are responsible for wreaking the most havoc with gamer's lives.

		Last Month	Months On Chart
1.	**Warcraft II** (Blizzard)	1	3
2.	**Command & Conquer** (Westwood)	3	6
3.	**Steel Panthers** (SSI)	2	5
4.	**Wing Commander IV** (Origin)	—	5
5.	**Heroes of Might and Magic** (New World Computing)	5	5
6.	**Crusader: No Remorse** (Origin)	—	3
7.	**Hexen** (Raven)	—	2
8.	**Duke Nukem 3D** (3D Realms)	—	1
9.	**Allied General** (SSI)	—	1
10.	**Panzer General** (SSI)	—	15

Wonders of the World. "But what of our armies?" you ask. "Surely, we are a peace-loving people, but we must defend ourselves against belligerent foes." And you are right. Archers, elephants, explorers, engineers, and others have joined the cause. But be forewarned, our advances are available for the enemy to steal or discover on their own. Though we may have returned stronger, so have our foes. A pity, though, that our adversaries are men of silicon, rather than flesh and blood. Still, this time, though the fruits of our labor will taste sweeter, ascendancy to the stars will be that much more difficult. Prepare yourselves, my friends, for the dawn of a new civilization has arrived, and none among the living will be able to resist its glory.—*E. Chin*

MicroProse (410) 771-0440;
PC CD-ROM; Windows
Reader Service #301

TERRA NOVA: STRIKE FORCE CENTAURI

Combining the firepower of a MECHWARRIOR with the feel of military commando actions, TERRA NOVA: STRIKE FORCE CENTAURI is a fast-paced 3-D romp across distant planetary surfaces. Simulation-style combat missions are interlaced with 3-D rendered cut scenes, an unfolding story to motivate gamers to keep playing, and lots of weapons. As you become more proficient in handling one armored warrior, you get to add soldiers to your unit and try your hand at command. Many gamers will welcome TERRA NOVA because it is fast, challenging and varied. Others will find that it is far too fast for them. The worst news is that the weapon ranges are so long that many of the special effects are wasted because the enemies are small, almost stick figures, and the explosions are smaller than gamers expect. MECHWARRIOR fans will elect to keep their exploding Mechs, while TERRA NOVA fans will watch from a distance.
—J. Wilson



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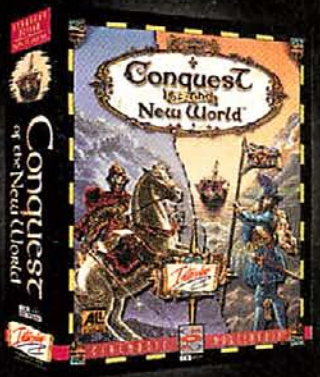
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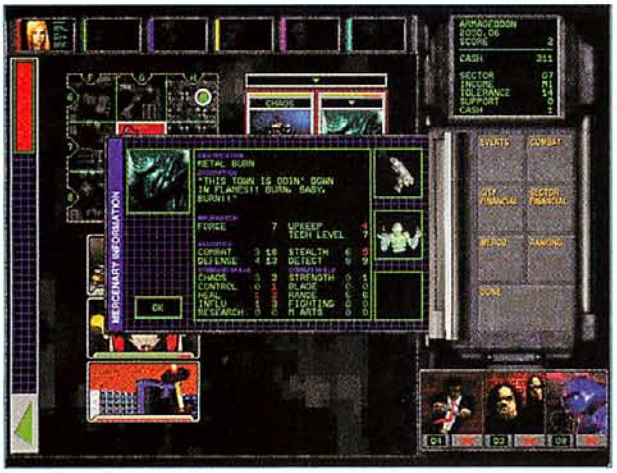
CQP2

Online Chaos Continues

Where Should Gamers Go For Multiplayer Games?

There are more questions than answers right now in the world of online gaming. Should you go with a service that allows you to connect your existing games with other players, or should you select a service that offers custom multiplayer games? Should you use a service that can be accessed by the Internet or should you choose an established service? What are the advantages of each?

Investors and software publishers are asking themselves the same questions. As the Total Entertainment Network (TEN) and Mpath approach their launch dates (as in any software enterprise, the operative acronym is RSN—Real Soon Now) and industry observers try to figure out The Microsoft Network's *game* plan and Interplay's alleged online strategy, many gamers are wondering where to turn.



GODFARTHER Mpath's customers will be able to play New World's CHAOS OVERLORDS online. The game lets you rule the underworld of the near future.

Both TEN and Mpath plan to offer multiple-server solutions to reduce latency (the lagtime between entering a command on your computer and receiving a response from the server or another computer). With fast-paced action games like multiplayer DUKE NUKEM 3D or QUAKE, latency can mean the difference between a frag or a miss. Using regional servers, both services will be able to reduce the average latency—meaning a potentially more satisfying game experience. Gamers will be able to enter these new services by either Internet connection or dial-up node.

Traditional networks have relied on packet switching technology, which is so slow that CYBERSTRIKE players on GEnie may shoot at robots on screen that have actually moved to new positions according to the server. As online gamers know, the more people who enter the arena, the worse the latency becomes. That's why word of The Microsoft Network's goal of putting thousands of people in the same gaming arena before opening another server seems unrealistic. Even if they were planning to use TEN (Apogee plans to partner with TEN on several first-person POV games) or Mpath's (New World will offer CHAOS OVERLORDS on this service) distributed server model, this approach is a killer. Right now, the only games of which we're aware, that can handle thousands of users in the same arena,

ON THE SHELF

DESCENT II



Grab the Dramamine and prepare for DESCENT II. This 360-degree, 3-D shoot-'em-up is nearly identical to the popular original, but it features new textures and environments, 30 new levels, 30 new enemy robots and 10 new weapons. DESCENT II also introduces a guide-bot that assists you in navigation, a thief-bot that attacks you and steals your weapons, and life-like light source rendering that enhances the effect of movement. The only thing missing is a re-orient button and a barf bag for those new to the joy of twisting aimlessly out of control.—*J. Anderson.*

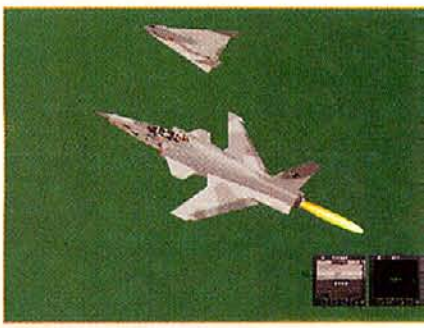


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Reader Service #303

ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS



At first glance, ATF looks like another US NAVY FIGHTERS expansion disc, with a few new planes. There's plenty here to keep even jaded USNF fans engaged, though. The new planes have stealth and thrust-vectoring aspects that let you use entirely new tactics to complete the sim's missions.



Videos of the real planes in action supplement the sim module, along with information culled from the authoritative *Jane's All the World's Aircraft.*

But the real added bonus here is multiplayer support. Go head-to-head over a modem link, or join a swarm of human opponents over a network connection, flying *any* of the planes

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The Whole Can 'O Worms

For those whose appetites for lunacy and danger are never satisfied, there's now a hefty double portion of his Jim-ness-in one convenient, spill-proof serving! So there's twice the adventure, twice the graphics, twice the whacked humor. Making for a combined 17 levels of maniacal mayhem.

But open it at your own risk-digesting the whole thing at one sitting may result in some major head-swelling.

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are play-by-electronic mail games on the Web like Crossover Technologies' PRESIDENT '96 (http://www.pres96.com). It can handle hundreds of thousands of users because they don't all have to be online simultaneously and there are no real-time responses. All results are resolved weekly.

Interplay's official strategy will not be announced until the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), but the company is expected to announce a multiserver strategy with both Internet connectivity and a traditional online strategy that will supplement existing online servers. As suggested in an earlier *CGW* editorial, we expect the same type of product aggregation strategy as we see in Interplay's MacPlay division. The E3 announcement is expected to include numerous strong partners in this venture. More on this next month.

Meanwhile, AOL has signed Kesmai (AIR WARRIOR, MULTI-PLAYER BATTLETECH, and more) as part of the service's new commitment to online games. Expect lots of announcements from AOL over the next few months. Further, Prodigy is moving most of its content to the Web and is expected to announce more dynamic multiplayer games than it has had in the past. Finally, CompuServe recently announced its new consumer emphasis with W.O.W., but the games announced there are versions of marble solitaire, blackjack, a famous face type of "Concentration" and a word puzzle.—*Johnny Wilson*

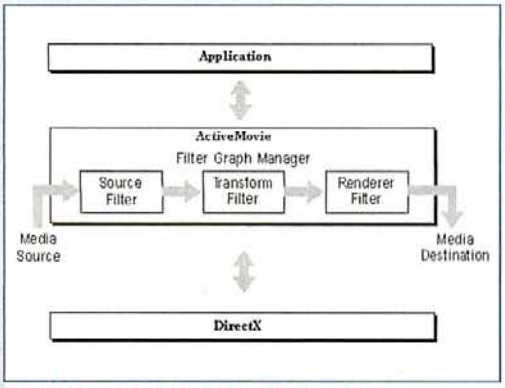
Look Out QuickTime...

Microsoft has developed a new technology called ActiveMovie that will make MPEG playback easier in Windows 95, and facilitate playback of various media from any source, including the Internet, according to the company. ActiveMovie is something of a "wrapper" technology that serves as a structure within which all media types, including AVI, QuickTime, WAV, MPEG, and MIDI files, can be synched and played.

Microsoft is positioning ActiveMovie as a key multimedia title development tool that tightly integrates with DirectX APIs. ActiveMovie has its own internal time code to which all streamed media can be slaved, which is intended to improve audio-video synchronization during playback. Multiple media types can be pieced together as well; for example, an MPEG file with a MIDI sequence added for background music.

The ActiveMovie playback process has three integral components: source filters, transform filters and renderer filters. The source filter first reads data in from a medium (hard disk, CD-ROM, network, etc.) and passes it to the filter graph manager. The transform filter decodes the data, and then passes it to the renderer filterer, which in turn renders the data using DirectX APIs where possible (see diagram).

The ActiveMovie technology is intended to be transparent to end-users, and should ship to developers in June, with ActiveMovie-ware titles to ship late this summer.—*Dave Salvator*



MISSION CONTROL ActiveMovie will be an extensible structure for playing most media types, past, present and future.

ON THE SHELF

in the simulation, from the F-4 Phantom to the X-32 ASTOVL. The variety of planes available in multiplayer mode promises long-lasting fun—it's like having an entire air force at your command.—*D. Atkin*
Electronic Arts, (415) 571-7171;
PC CD-ROM
Reader Service #304

EARTHSIEGE 2



With detailed textures atop the polygon-based robots, new robot types, better controls, a robot to be flown in air combat, and a host of new missions, Sierra's Dynamix division once again takes aim at MECHWARRIOR. Though this series suffers from not having the rich universe and back story of the FASA property and Activision design, the action is



faster and, at times, more furious than in its competitor. Pure action gamers may actually prefer this game to the more simulation-esque design of MECHWARRIOR 2. Regardless, EARTHSIEGE 2 features a planet under attack by the Cybrids, those AI-controlled enemies that turned on their masters in the original EARTHSIEGE. This time, it's an all-out battle and the missions get hairier and hairier as the game moves toward its climax.—*J. Wilson.*
Sierra (800-757-7707);
http://www.sierra.com;
PC CD-ROM
Reader Service #305.

SPYCRAFT: THE GREAT GAME



If you thought espionage was all about hanging out in Monte Carlo and sipping martinis, think again. Developed with input from intelligence experts William Colby and Oleg Kalugin, SPYCRAFT: THE GREAT GAME is low on the cloak-and-dagger stuff, but nevertheless provides a high level of suspense. As CIA case officer Thorn, you must sift through and analyze piles of information



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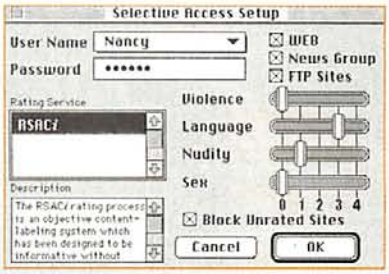
I·MOTION INTERACTIVE

SPA Focuses On The Pipe

Publishers Discuss Internet Potential At Spring Symposium

Software publishers once gathered to talk about packaged products and "the channel," marketing lingo for the distribution system. Today, they are gathering to talk about not only the "channel," but the "pipe," or the Internet and its potential for online applets, games, services and distribution. At SPA's Spring Symposium in March, the subject on everyone's mind was the Internet and the potential it presents for the future.

SPA Executive Director Ken Wasch announced that Microsoft Corporation has expressed its intent to place the Recreational Software Advisory Council's (RSAC) Internet Ratings setup screen on the next build of its browser—the Microsoft Internet Explorer. This plan will allow parents and consumers to set their browsers to filter such material as Violence, Sex/Nudity and Language based on threshold ratings. The ratings, 1 indicating mild content and 4 denoting extreme material, are currently used to rate many existing computer games, and could be preset as an Internet filter via software. The criteria used to rate Internet material will be the same as that used to rate over 350 titles from over 90 companies in the packaged-software market.



In other items of interest to gamers, *Computer Gaming World* hosted a panel on "Issues In Online Game Development" which brought representatives of new online services and existing game developers together to speak about technological, game design, and economic issues surrounding the burgeoning multiplayer-game market. Other panels dealt with using the Internet for advertisements and customer service.

On the more traditional level, the SPA's Software Packaging Group continued to develop guidelines for using standardized wording and package placement for systems requirements, making shopping easier for everyone. Also in evidence at the symposium were new materials for the on-going Anti-Piracy Campaign. This year, the battle will focus on consumer software piracy and international piracy.

Robert Wuhl (*Cobb, Good Morning, Vietnam*) hosted the black-tie Codie Awards Ceremony where the following game-related awards were presented. For Best Action/Arcade Software, the winner was LucasArts' DARK FORCES. In a surprise victory, the winner of Best Adventure/Role Playing Software was a consumer version of one of the oldest educational games in the country, OREGON TRAIL II from MECC. The Best Sports Software award went to Papyrus Design Group's INDYCAR RACING II. In what was the most controversial victory of the night for us, The Logic Factory's ASCENDANCY was awarded Best Strategy Software. The game has abominable AI, and we were amazed at the number of judges and SPA voters who felt the AI had given them a tough run for their money.

Finally, since an educational title won the Adventure/Role-Playing award, we felt turn-about was fair play when a game won the Best Home Learning Program for Adolescents: THE LOST MIND OF DR. BRAIN from Sierra On-Line, Inc.

— Johnny Wilson

ON THE SHELF



using high-tech gadgets and tools just like the guys at Langley. And you'd better be quick about it; a Russian presidential candidate has just been assassinated, and the U.S. president could be next. Worse, there seems to be a mole in the organization, so you'd better watch your back. Suffering only from occasionally nonsensical dialogue trees, and a relatively short length, SPYCRAFT should provide a few hours of intense, if brief, entertainment until the next Tom Clancy novel comes out. *—K. Hedstrom*

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If finding the right key on the keyboard to activate your ECM pod usually takes so long that you end up with an AMRAAM stuck up your tail, check out the CH Pro Throttle. This comfortable throttle features four buttons and four four-way hat switches, all programmable, as well as a throttle that can send both analog and keyboard commands. The DOS program used to program the throttle could use an interface makeover, but it beats writing a script in a text editor. Multiple characters can be assigned to each button/hat press and release. The buttons and hat of a CH-compatible joystick attached to the throttle can also be programmed. A great throttle choice for those who find the Thrustmaster TQS overkill. Our only major complaint is the lack of a détente to mark the afterburner portion of the throttle movement. *—D. Atkin*



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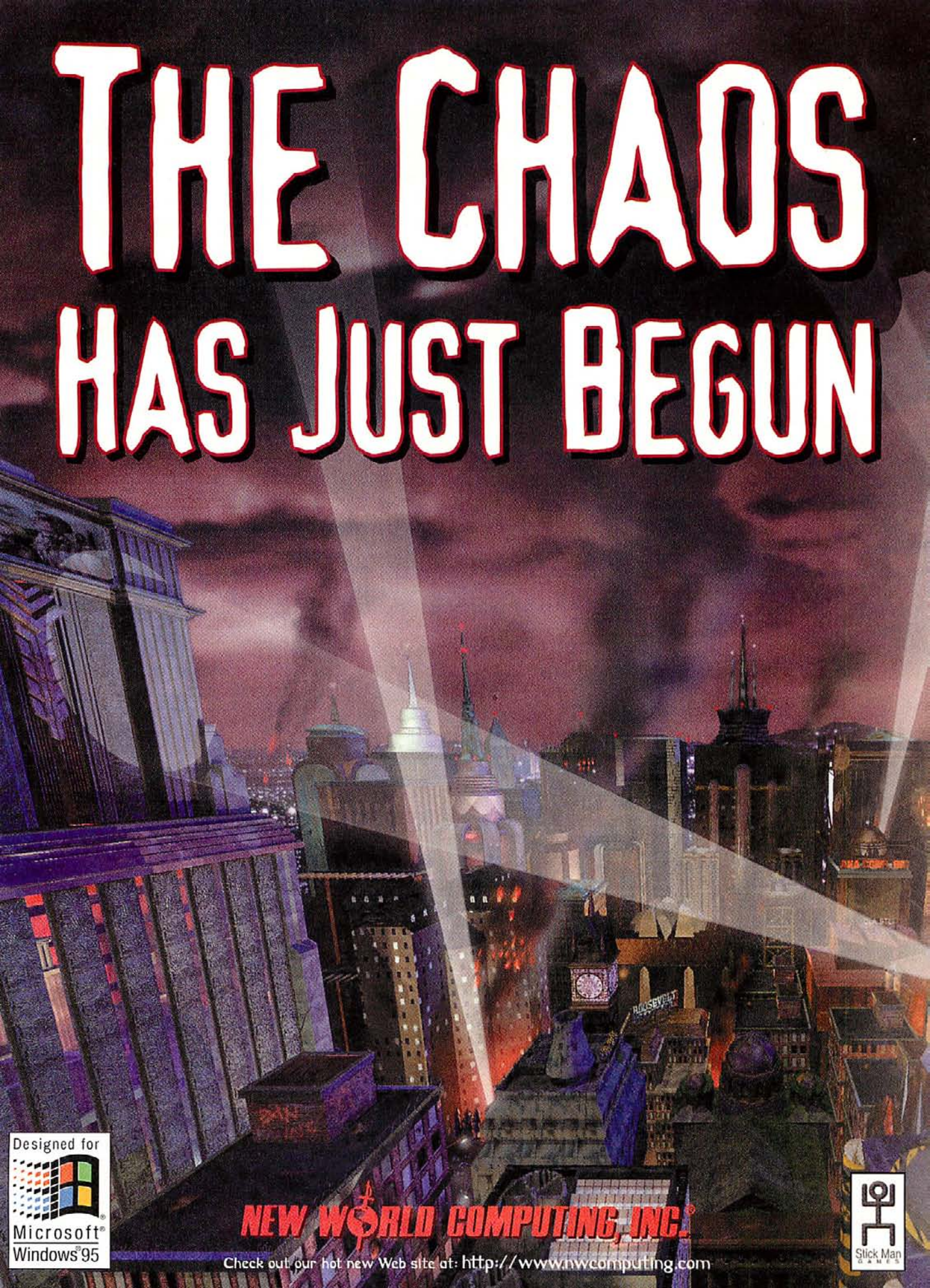
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Contests For Heroes, Spies

New World Computing is sponsoring a World Building Contest for the HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC game. The contest, which began March 1, 1996, and runs until midnight June 29, 1996, will judge the maps created with the enclosed editor in the Windows 95 version of the game (multiple, separate entries are welcome). If your scenario passes the crash test—two crashes and you're out—it will be judged on its playability and originality. The grand prize winner will receive a complete multimedia computer system, with other prizes including, software gift certificates, and complete libraries of New World Computing games. See the New World Computing Web site at http://www.nwcomputing.com for entry forms and rules.

Or, if you prefer covert operations, how about an "espionage vacation" in the Bahamas courtesy of Activision's SYPCRAFT contest. Five grand prize winners will be trained in "spy" activities such as surveillance, self-defense, the use of night-vision equipment, and the ever-popular action movie sequence—jet skiing. All winners will be chosen by random drawing, but you better hurry—the contest runs through May 13, 1996. For details on how to register, visit Activision's Web page at http://www.activision.com. —*Jill Anderson*

ON THE SHELF

H!ZONE



While playing HEXEN, do you miss your old DOOM WAD files? Looking for new worlds to conquer? Well, I have good news and bad news for you. The good news: H!ZONE is a superb utility that allows you to convert and manage WAD files for HEXEN, HERETIC, DOOM II and DOOM. It has many features and levels you will not find anywhere else. The bad news: It has the worst interface we've seen. Not only is it coded in ANSI, it's *bad* ANSI. The buttons are cryptic and the operation clumsy. You will need to read the book on this one. They did a good job on the program, but perhaps the designers should take some art classes. —*G. Fortune*



Wizard Works (612) 559-5301
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Reader Service #308

HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC FOR WINDOWS 95



One of the best fantasy strategy games of 1995 has returned to the PC with all new bells and whistles, improvements, and for a new platform. HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC was



a stellar DOS-based strategy game, and now the Windows 95 version has appeared on the shelves. However, the change of platform isn't the only new feature of this product. HEROES FOR WIN 95 also comes with a scenario editor for creating your own maps and scenarios. This is wonderful, as it adds re-playability to an already excellent game. You can draw your own maps, or call up random ones and populate it with your own mix of treasures and monsters. But the fun doesn't stop there; New World has included 16 new scenarios, and they're not just more of the same. And to top it all off, the Win 95 version even includes a copy of KING'S BOUNTY, the predecessor to HEROES. All in all, a value-added upgrade to a five-star game.—*E. Chin*

New World Computing (800) 251-9563
(818-734-7136 outside US);
PC CD-ROM; Windows
Reader Service #309

FOXHUNT



What do you get when you cross James Bond with Jim Carey? How about Jack Fremont, the anti-hero of Capcoms' new title FOXHUNT. In this interactive comedy spy thriller, you become Jack, a self-confessed TV trivia addict, who fancies himself as a bit of a smooth guy, but is really a penniless slob.

The basic plot of this point-and-click game is predictable: Regular Guy becomes a spy for a day. You have 24 hours to sniff out the bad guys, turn them in, get the girl, and grab the cash, while picking up clues, navigating through mazes and avoiding an untimely and gruesome death.

More entertaining are the lengthy non-interactive scenes, which allow you to enjoy the farcical movie, and hear Jack deliver such classic lines as, "Don't shoot me. I'm afraid of loud noises!" An abundance of bodily-function humor combined with the geeky Jack's disgusting habits raise this to the "It's so bad it's good" category!

Not for everybody's taste, but worth a look if only to see the excellent video graphics and the notable cast, including Rob Lowe and the ex-James Bond himself, George Lazenby.
— *C. Panther*

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SIGHTINGS

Here's an early look at the space invaders that will be vying for room on your hard drive. Some of these games are still months away, and they aren't even playable yet, but at least you can see what they look like, and get an idea what their intentions are.

Leisure Suit Larry 7

The next installment in the love life of Larry Laffer could well be called "The Lust Boat." The Baron of Bawd, Al Lowe, has placed Larry on-board a cruise ship full of enough buxom babes to get Sierra arrested for balloon smuggling (ask an old frat rat, if you don't get it). The caricatures of such pulchritudinous femmes as Dewmi Moore and Drew Barememore are sure to build one Sierra artist's reputation. Memo is Sierra's answer to *Playboy*'s Vargas.

More importantly for game play, Al says that this Larry will feature richer, user-directed communication between Larry and the "babes," using a context-sensitive list of key words. The next Larry is expected to ship in time for this holiday season.



Betrayal at Antara

Sierra is attempting to undo the damage caused by its Dynamix division when it cancelled the sequel to the Hall of Fame-winning BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR, the role-playing classic based on Raymond E. Feist's universe. With BETRAYAL AT ANTARA, a new team is using new technology to develop a new mythos. ANTARA will offer some of the 3-D feel of the Hall-of-Fame game, but will offer different cultures and different creatures than either Feist or standard-fantasy fare. ANTARA will be a skill-based game where players can improve one to five skills at a time through "practice." Perhaps most interesting will be ANTARA's new tactical combat, featuring a "disguised" hex-style tactical combat and new combat options. We also think role-players will be fascinated by the way characters can research spells by combining different areas of knowledge. There are lots of fresh ideas in ANTARA and we hope gamers will give it a chance.



Over the Reich

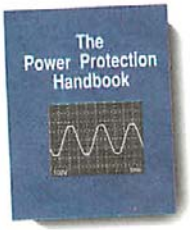
Designer Charlie Moylan enjoys breaking with tradition. His FLIGHT COMMANDER 2 was a flight combat *strategy* game, making its mark in gaming skies filled with first-person flight simulators. Now, Moylan teams with Avalon Hill to bring one of J.D. Webster's most acclaimed board game designs to the IBM. OVER THE REICH—due this Summer—attempts to tackle the incredibly complex modelings of WWII aircraft and make them manageable, while still retaining the high degree of realism for which both designers are noted. The operational scale of the game is perfect to show the grand sweep of the Battle of Britain: radar, close escort fighters, "hunter" tactics, strafing, even night bombing, are all scheduled for inclusion. All in all, a grand undertaking which looks to leave even the ground-breaking (air-breaking?) FLIGHT COMMANDER 2 behind.



9

No, it's not a John Lennon song, it's the first game to be released by Robert DeNiro's soon-to-be-announced company, Tribeca Interactive. You've just inherited a Fantasy Resort for Rock 'n' Roll stars in this sinister and bizarre 3-D adventure world. With a brochure and a post card in hand, you find yourself at the front door of the dilapidated resort. The caretaker—an odd little fellow with an ingenious mode of transport—isn't particularly friendly, but you should keep him on your side as he'll help you combat the mischievous deeds of the toxic twins who continue to thwart your efforts. It's up to you to fix up the ol' place and rebuild the Muse Machine that pumps energy back into the resort and the visiting, ailing rock stars. If you need more guidance, consult the soothsayer, played by Cher. 9 will be simultaneously released for the Mac and PC in early summer.



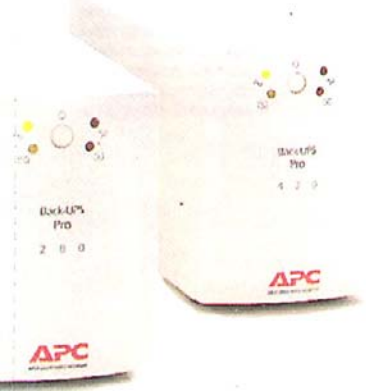


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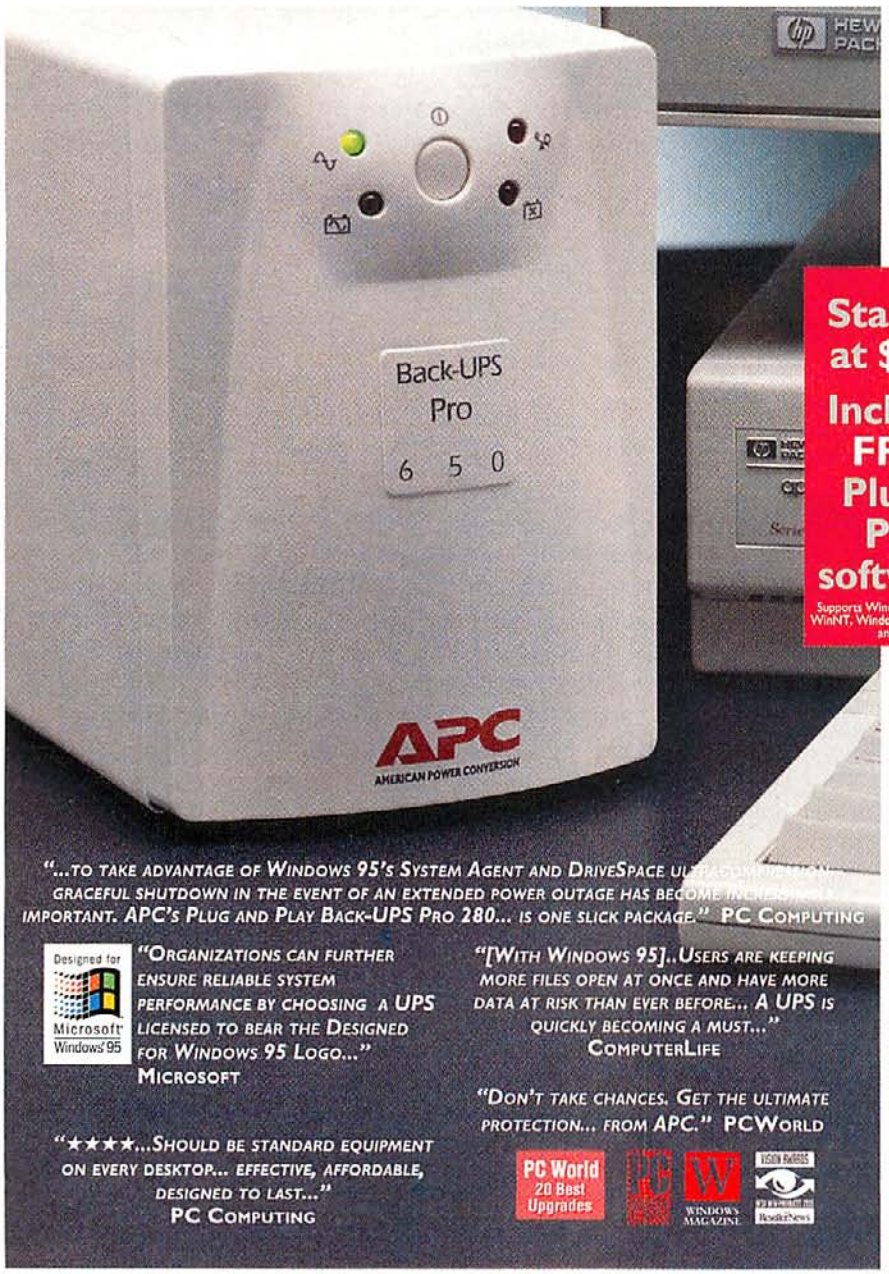
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HANDS ON

These are the products in development we've actually spent some time with. They represent some of the most interesting titles in the Pipeline, and they are complete enough to actually tell how they're going to play. Most should be released soon.

Quake Death Match

Frag, you're it. id Software recently unleashed a peek at its latest horrific brainchild, QUAKE. Perhaps feeling some heat from DUKE NUKEM 3D's buzz, the DOOMinators have released a death match version of QUAKE where you and several close friends can blow each other into tiny pieces. The so-called "technology demo" allows null-modem and modem-based head-to-head matches, and up to eight players for a full-on LAN-based splatterfest.

QUAKE is a true 3-D polygon-based world where everything, including the players, has much more depth and realism than any of id's previous games. Though some of the graphics are still pretty raw, the overall effect is enough to keep you coming back for gore. Highlights include new weapons like a nail gun, and its bigger, uglier cousin, the super nail gun. For more direct results, the grenade tosser and rocket-propelled grenade weapons will leave opponents speechless (and probably headless). As a match progresses, the level becomes littered with carcases and assorted body parts from previous meaningful rendezvous. Another highlight is the collection of sounds, ranging from deep explosions to wrenching screams of anguish.





Because the death match is basically an early beta of the forthcoming final version, there are some rough edges, though its rough-hewn state leaves it much more configurable. The entire game is driven from a command prompt where you can tweak a lot of different game attributes ranging from the color of your player's clothes (can you say "camouflage"?) to the amount of gravity the level has.

Getting a LAN-based frag-a-thon to work, with one system acting as the "server" to the other systems, took some doing. However, having additional players makes for enhanced mayhem.—*D. Salvator*

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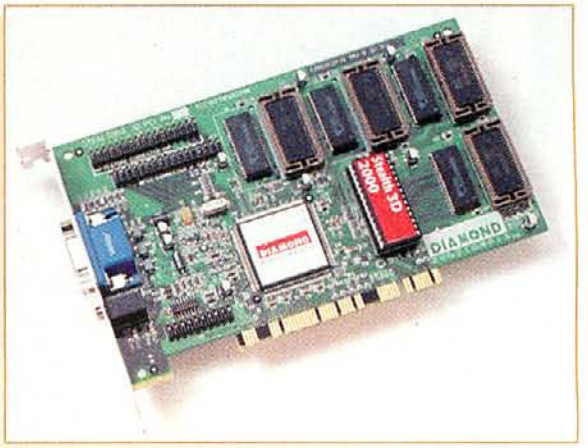
EXCLUSIVE!

Diamond Stealth

Diamond will be shipping its Stealth 3D 2000 by late June, but we got hold of a beta unit with beta drivers and were pretty impressed. We checked out the Stealth running an early build of DESCENT II that takes advantage of some of the Stealth's rendering features, and under Windows 95 we ran MECHWARRIOR 2—DirectDraw drivers and all.

The Stealth is based on S3's ViRGE 3D chip, and has hardware support for Z-buffering, MIP mapping, bi-linear filtering, texture mapping with perspective correction, alpha blending and fogging. The Stealth will support titles using Direct3D when they ship; meanwhile, the planned software bundling will include DESCENT II, DESTRUCTION DERBY, and TERMINAL VELOCITY.

The estimated street price is $249 with 2MB of EDO DRAM. In our preview tests, the "enhanced" version of DESCENT II was expectedly shaky in overall performance, but the rendering quality was very impressive. Especially striking were the detailed texture maps on the walls, and the anti-aliasing of all vertices kept the "jaggies" to a minimum.



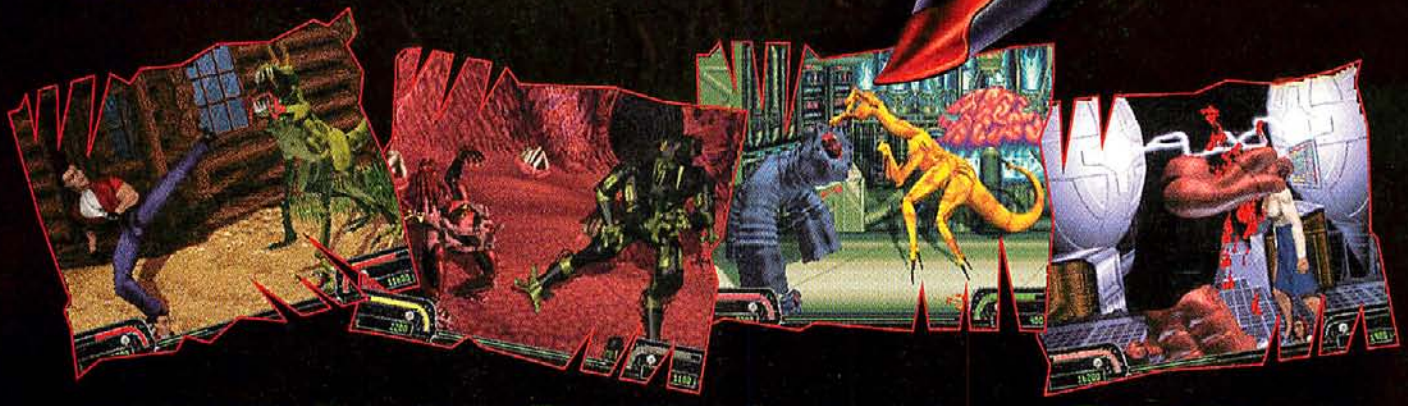
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HANDS ON

The frame rate was jittery and somewhat slow, but not surprising being an early beta build. Also, as we flew the ship close to walls, the Stealth's MIP-mapping helped maintain image integrity of the texture maps. (MIP mapping stores multiple texture maps of varying detail that the game's rendering engine can switch to as you move close to an object. So rather than the wall's pixels getting progressively blockier, the rendering engine switches to another texture map for better image quality.)

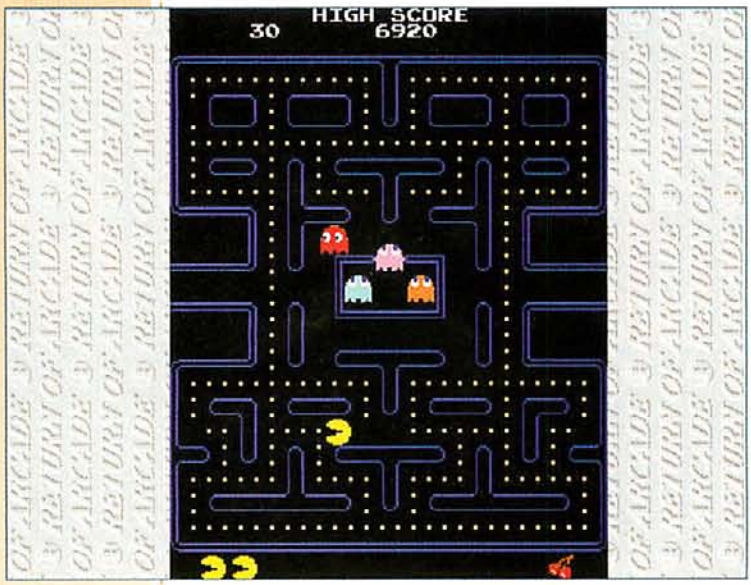
In Windows 95, MECHWARRIOR 2 ran well even with a desktop resolution of 1024 x 768. Here again, the frame rate wasn't altogether up to speed, but the Stealth's beta drivers still let us wreak some mech-havoc without a crash. When Diamond has final hardware and drivers ready for prime time, we'll put them through their paces, and tell you what we found.—*D. Salvator*

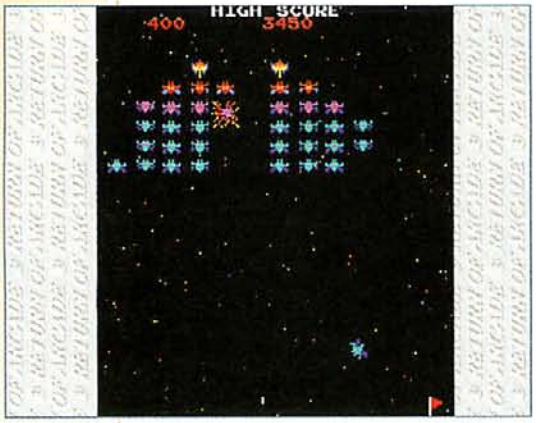
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PC

Microsoft Return of the Arcade

They're back! Microsoft is bringing back four of the old arcade table-style games from a decade gone by, and fitting them nicely on your desktop. PAC MAN, THE GALAXIANS, POLE POSITION and DIG DUG are back and identical to the coin-op originals—right down to the catchy little ditties. What makes these games worthy of resurrecting is that they're easy to play, short games that perfectly fill small (and large) gaps of time. Now, you can guide PACMAN around the maze, avoiding the ghosts and gobbling the buttons, while waiting for that meeting to start. Or, test your reflexes by shooting aliens out of the sky and avoiding the falling bombs in GALAXIANS whenever that receptionist puts you on hold. And the beauty of it is, once the games are installed on your hard drive, and opened like any other application, they can be minimized into the Microsoft task bar at the bottom of your screen for quick, easy access and escapes. The problem is, the games are as addicting as ever. RETURN OF THE ARCADE should be gobbling up space on retailers' shelves by the time you read this.





—*J. Anderson*

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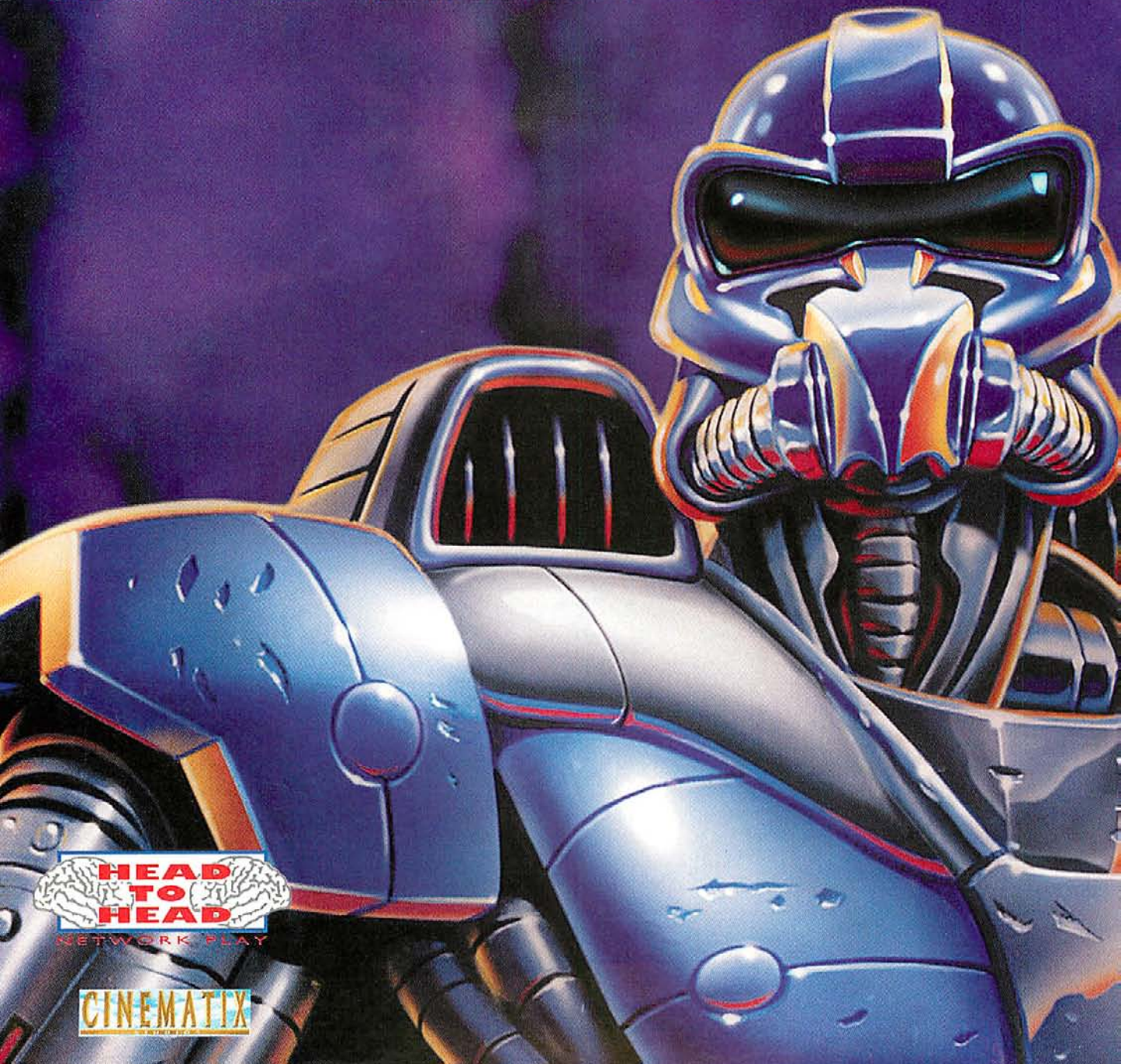
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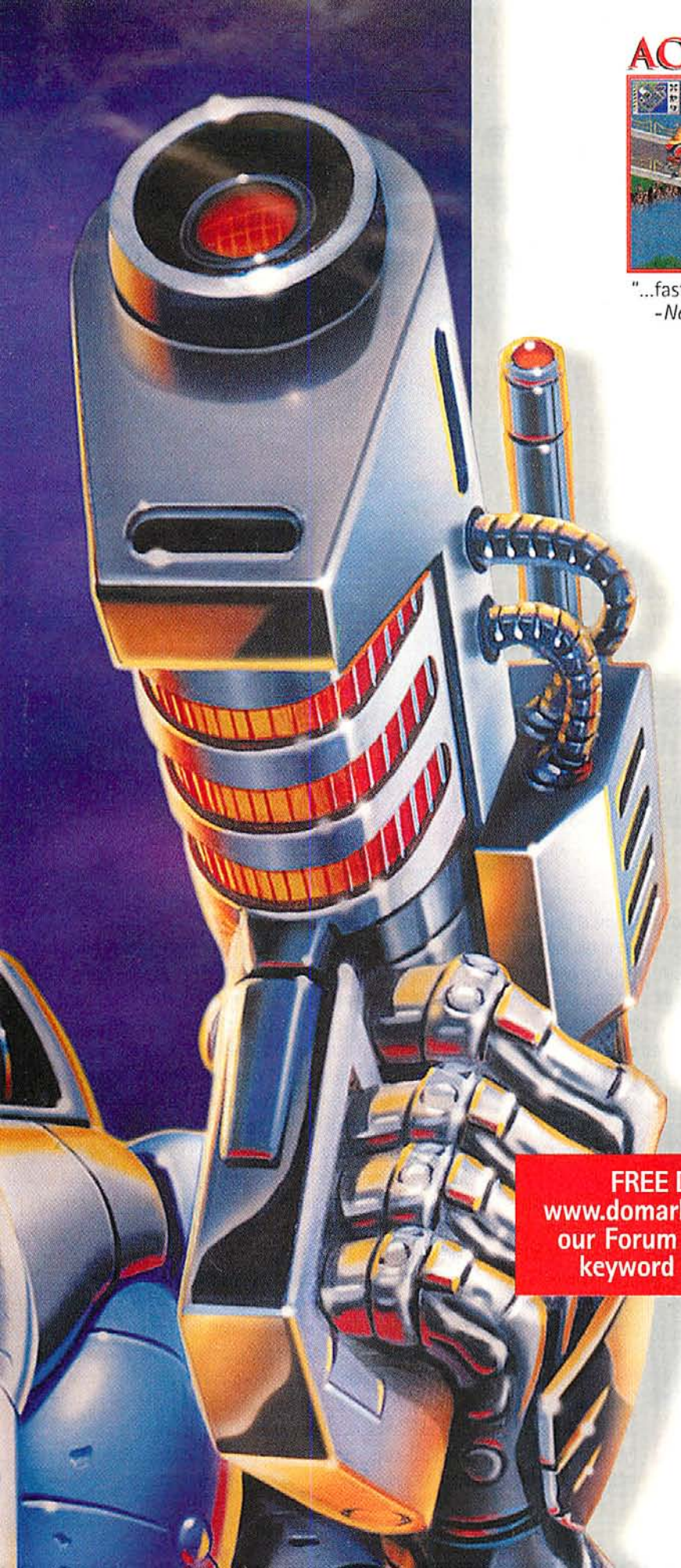
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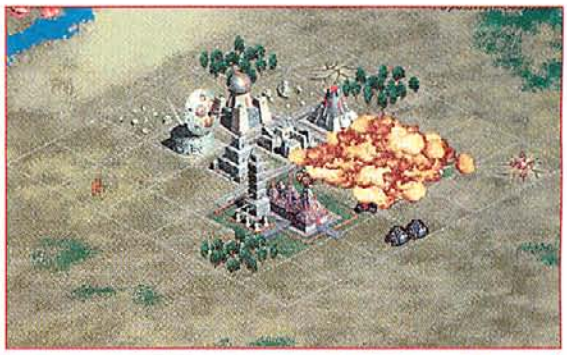
CG SNEAK PREVIEW
GAME STILL IN DEVELOPMENT

SimCity Meets Civilization In A Cosmic Battle Over A Newfound Planet

by Denny Atkin

With few habitable planets in known space, and all spacefaring races desperate for room to grow, Gallius IV was a rare prize indeed. The newly discovered planet seemed ready to ignite a war of previously unseen proportions. As the anti-matter beams began flying, it became evident that the battle would have no victor—the mass of firepower gathered over Gallius IV would only burn away the planet's atmosphere if unleashed. It was a no-win situation. A deadlock.

A treaty was hastily crafted—the Compact of Gallius IV—as none of the races wished to see their potential price incinerated. Each alien race would send a group of colonists down to the planet, equipped with only the bare essentials. The race that first proved capable of building five cities—or the race that could first wipe out all the other colonists—would gain possession of Gallius IV to exploit or colonize as it pleased.



DESTRUCTION ZONE Although battles are turn-based, you can view real-time replays, such as this building falling to Uva Mosk forces.

SWORDS OR PLOWSHARES?

That's the situation in DEADLOCK, Accolade's game of planetary conquest. As an alien commander, you'll work to obtain Gallius IV for your people, either peaceably or forcefully. Your opponents will be one to six alien races with decidedly different strengths and methods, driven by artificial intelligences or networked human players. Although it may seem somewhat derivative, at first, the richly developed backgrounds of the alien races and the thoroughly refined technology tree give this game a personality all its own.



GETTING TANKED The overview map shows distribution of laser tanks and other forces across the planetside.

You'll start out with only 400 colonists, a city center, a colonizer unit, and 500 monetary credits to your name. Settlers have a starter supply of food, wood, energy and iron. That's it. From there, it's a matter of using those resources to build a self-sufficient, expanding colony. Whether your planetary conquest plans are honorable or dastardly, you'll still need to build a heavy infrastructure.

After settling in, you'll zoom in on your home territory, where you'll build your initial colony SIMCITY-style. Drop down farms, mines, factories, power plants, universities, cultural centers, and other buildings as you construct your colony. These structures won't build and run themselves, though. You'll need personnel for the construction and operation of each building, as well as the raw materials to build them. Personnel are *the* vital resource in this game. The more workers you drop on a building square, the faster it will be built, the more it will produce, and the faster it will be upgraded when new technologies become available. You'll start with simple structures such as apartments and farms, but eventually shipyards, missile bases, tech labs, defense cannons, and other high-tech structures come into play.

Which structures to build is only part of the game; *where* you build them is just as important. Mines work best in rocky regions, while the cracked earth squares are best for producing energy. Some squares have bonus markers, and will produce above-normal quantities of a given resource. When you expand into multiple territories, you'll need to consider in which territory you want to build a particular structure. While you can transport resources between colonized areas, it costs money to do so, and takes time to move them. Occasionally, when exploring a new territory, you'll come



RESERVE FORCES You can distribute workers to speed production; the mob in the apartment at center should be moved to the unoccupied factory behind it.

across native shrines or precursor artifacts, which will provide you with advanced technologies.

Once your basic infrastructure is in place, expansion is the name of the game. You're initially equipped with a colonizer, the most basic of the military units. The colonizer can scout around for acceptable territories, but your best bet is to colonize nearby in order to keep your supply lines open. If you choose to attempt a peaceable win, you'll concentrate on defense and building your economy to the point where you'll have the cash and resources needed to build city centers in five territories. Military success also depends on a strong economy, but you'll spend the cash on the research needed to build the really big guns.

RACE FOR CONQUEST

Although all of the aliens start with the same equipment, each possesses certain special abilities which will affect their strategies for planetary conquest. The insectoid ChCh-t grow population extremely quickly. The Vorlon-like Cyth have psionic abilities they can use to devastate their opponents. Also, since they're *always* depressed, they aren't affected by low morale like the other races.

Humans, not surprisingly, have an income advantage due to their talent for profit and trade. The horned, chronically ill Maug are superb at technological research, while the warlike Tarth build incredibly strong armies. The naturalist Uva Mosk are brilliant at extracting resources from the planet, while the telepathic Re'Lu always know what's going on with the other races.

Unlike the animatronic-like computer animated aliens you may have encountered in other games, the DEADLOCK aliens actually manage to exhibit personality. The warlike Tarth are convincingly portrayed as simple, doglike creatures, while the Re'Lu come across so smarmy and self-satisfied that you just want to reach up to the screen and slap them.

Brags, insults, threats, and complaints are among your psychological arsenal. Usually they're at least amusing, and occasionally laugh-out-loud funny. The slow, militaristic Tarth may send a message along the lines of "Now not good time to be Tarth; maybe yesterday, but not today," when things are down for them. On the other hand, the Re'Lu are almost always snitty, with comments like "Look over your map, notice the flourishing Re'Lu cities, and please be jealous." The alien personalities carry into their architecture as well, and the included novella gives thorough details on each race's history.

One race refused to participate in the Gallius IV experiment—the Skirineen. While they consider themselves above equal competition with "inferior" races, they still condescend to take their money. The Skirineen serve as DEADLOCK's black market, selling resources, information, technology, and arms to any race willing to risk the repercussions of being caught dealing with them.

STAR TECH

Research is the key to ensuring that *your* alien race takes Gallius IV. Building masses of basic troops and attempting to crush your enemies without developing advanced technologies is ineffective. Defensive technologies, often ignored in games of DEADLOCK's ilk, are heavily stressed here. Build all the Laser Troopers you want—chances are the enemy's Defense Cannons will take them out before they can scratch anything. Neuron beams allow you to create Anti-Matter defense systems.

Not all the technologies are military in nature. Advanced technologies are also needed if you're going to remain economically competitive, and they aid in keeping your people happy. Metallurgy lets you convert iron into steel. Matter synthesis allows you to build food replicators, and a well-fed populace generally has a better demeanor. Interlink computers eliminate transport costs, and allow units to move a greater distance. Some technologies have crossover utility: automation







ALIEN NATIONS The Re'Lu, Tarth, and Cyth all exhibit distinct, and occasionally annoying, personalities.



speeds the conversion of ore *and* the production of military units, and chaos computers not only speed research, but also let you build Starflare Bomber units.

Striking a balance is the key here. Economic and material infrastructure is vital, but *don't* let your defensive capabilities fall behind. All the money in the world won't help if you get caught with your pants down (assuming the race you're playing *wears* pants).



INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION Factories are crucial to military and peaceful expansion. They build combat units, and convert iron into steel.



BATTLE CRIES

In the Alpha version of DEADLOCK, the actual battle sequences were the weakest elements, particularly when compared with the strong resource management and exploration elements. You can tell forces to concentrate on eliminating buildings or populace, or take a defensive strategy; you can also set a damage level where the unit will try to retreat. You get a report on how the battle played out at the beginning of the next turn, and you can optionally replay a video of the fight.

Basically, you end up with only a little more control over the battle than in games like CIVILIZATION. The DEADLOCK team is considering other combat options that allow you to pinpoint specific buildings to attack, so you could, say, take out a threatening missile silo. The dilemma is balancing the desire to give the user some strategic control over the fighting while not making all the other players in a multiplayer game sit around and wait on the battle's resolution.

FRIENDS AND ALIENS

Although DEADLOCK should fare well as a single-player game, it truly shines as a multiplayer experience. Up to seven human players can participate. The game's Taunt feature is enjoyable even in single-player mode, but it's particularly enjoyable when friends and enemies are the targets of the computer's ruthless jibes. You can create custom taunts, but you'll have more fun listening to the computer's. Choose to send an Insult, Threat, Brag, or Complaint and a beautifully animated 3-D alien will pop up in a window on your opponents screen and annoy them with a randomly chosen witty dig.

DEADLOCK's designers have taken into account the time limitations inherent in multiplayer games and included a number of fine-tuning options that will allow you to tailor the game's length. An optional Fast Production feature speeds the building of cities and industrial output. You can set victory to require 5 (the default) cities, or bump it to 7, 10, or 15 if you're looking for a marathon-length game. Custom planet sizes can increase—or reduce—the chances of bumping up against an unfriendly neighbor.

Finding opponents shouldn't be too difficult. DEADLOCK supports LAN, Internet, modem, and even e-mail play.

LOCK AND LOAD

This is definitely a hybrid game—not only will you be put in the mind of SIMCITY 2000 and CIVILIZATION, but the economics and exploration elements may remind long-time gamers of the another classic. If all the elements continue to come together as well as they have so far, this could very well be the M.U.L.E. of the 1990s. Ask any long-time gamer and you'll discover that's high praise indeed.

Al Carumba

The weakest part of the alpha version of DEADLOCK that we examined was the artificial intelligence. Of course, at this point in development, the AI was still even a bit confused about some of the rules. Thus, much of our play so far has been in network mode. We quizzed DEADLOCK's programming team about the AI that would drive the final game. It seems that the alien AIs will function more or less like the government bureaucracies, only they'll be efficient.

At the head of the organizational chart of each alien race's AI structure is the president. It's this randomly chosen character who will determine the overall tactics of a race in a particular game—economic or militaristic. The president chooses AI ministers of technology, defense, war, government, commerce, and labor, each of whom is responsible for managing certain sectors of the colony's infrastructure. The labor minister, for instance, attempts to provide as many happy workers as possible. To accomplish this, he requests the necessary resources to provide enough food, culture, and housing to create a happy and growing populace. Similarly, the defense minister does what's necessary to keep from losing territory, by requesting the resources needed to build defensive weaponry and the military forces needed to protect each territory.

Each minister is assigned a priority by the president, so a warlike government is more likely to favor the technology, defense, and war ministers' requests. All of this goes on behind the scenes, invisible to the player. Accolade is considering implementing an extra set of the AI ministers who could offer the player advice upon request, informing you of the tactics they would choose if playing at the behest of an AI president.

These techniques should result in computer players who play with rich, involved strategies that involve building a complete infrastructure, instead of simpleton routines that concentrate only on the resources that are absolutely necessary to win the game.

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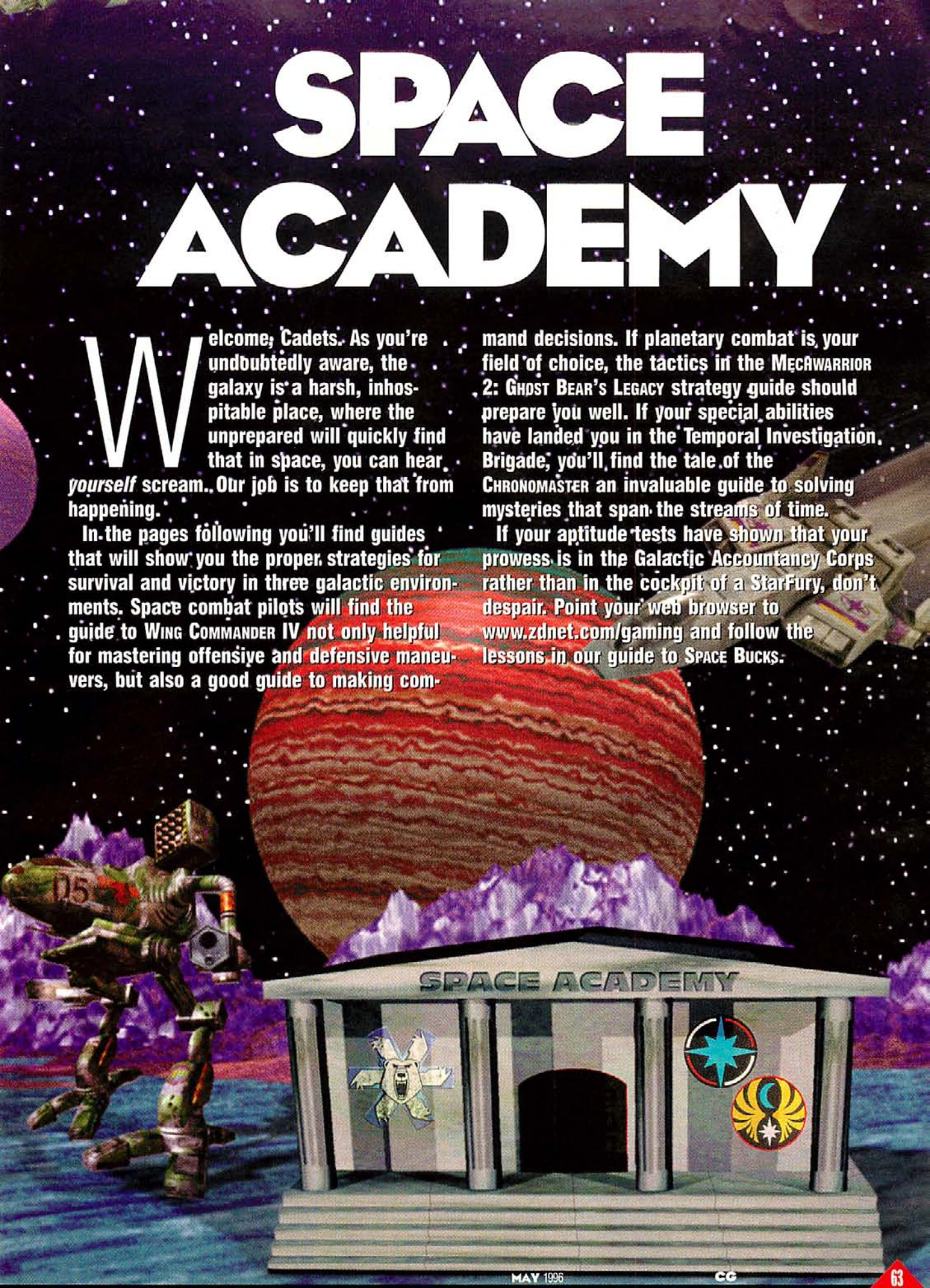
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DOGFIGHTING WITH HELLCATS

Tactics To Keep Torpedoes Out Of Your Tailpipe In Wing IV

by Scott A. May

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. This is a phrase you'll hear repeated often in Wing Commander IV, Cadet, and it's your key to success in Origin's latest and greatest space combat adventure. You'll find this is no ordinary pilot training; here you'll learn that sometimes you'll have to make some hard choices that aren't covered by the reg books.

No longer confronted by one conspicuous source of aggression, the game continually blurs the line between good and evil. This is a superb blend of character study, plot twists and white-knuckle action, where survival depends as much on logic skills as tactical prowess.



HIDE AND SEEK Plier's cloaking device will get you out of many jams, and is your best defense in some of the game's tough covert missions.

BACK IN ACTION

Forty years of interstellar war with the Kilrathi have come to an end. Your alter ego, war hero Christopher Blair, has retired from the Confederate Navy to become a simple farmer. Yet all is far from serene in this corner of the universe. Renegade troops from the Border Worlds, who fought so bravely alongside Terran forces in the Kilrathi wars, have begun attacking non-military Confed ships. Admiral Tolwyn, now commander of the Strategic Readiness Agency, vows to eradicate the rebels, ending speculation of civil war.

Blair soon finds himself recalled to active duty, a message gleefully delivered by the abrasive Maniac, his former star wingman. The pair report immediately to Tolwyn aboard Confed's new supercarrier Lexington, commanded by their trusted old friend, captain Eisen. Blair soon notices something odd about Eisen's behavior, as if he's hiding something. Not long into the initial missions, Eisen is unceremoniously removed from command. He's replaced by the arrogant captain Paulsen, who comes aboard armed with a brazen attitude that smacks of Tolwyn's influence.

Otherwise faithful crew members begin to question Paulsen's presence and Confed's harsh directives. Is this conflict with the Border Worlds a setup? The rebels' declaration of independence seems oddly pleasing to Tolwyn, who uses the announcement to escalate the Confed offensive. What could be his hidden agenda? As tensions mount, a fateful decision must be made: Do you back the system, like any dutiful soldier, or do you trust the instincts that tell you something is horribly wrong?

MISSIONS CRITICAL

Nuances: most missions in WC4 are full of them. Sometimes it's best to ignore your instincts and read between the lines of your mission objectives. For example, in one of the earliest missions, you're ordered to follow a group of pirate ships to their home base. Your natural tendency may be to ride their tails, an itchy finger poised on the fire button. Get too close, however, and they'll jump, leaving you high and dry. Instead, stay about 20,000 klicks behind until they approach their base, then press T to target the carrier. When the computer announces "mission complete," stop immediately and return to base before you're spotted.

On the first ground mission (B3, see the mission chart sidebar),

gearheads: War is fun.

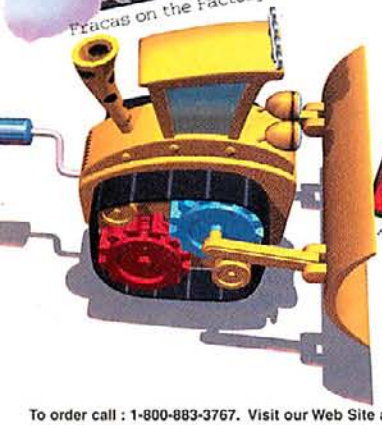




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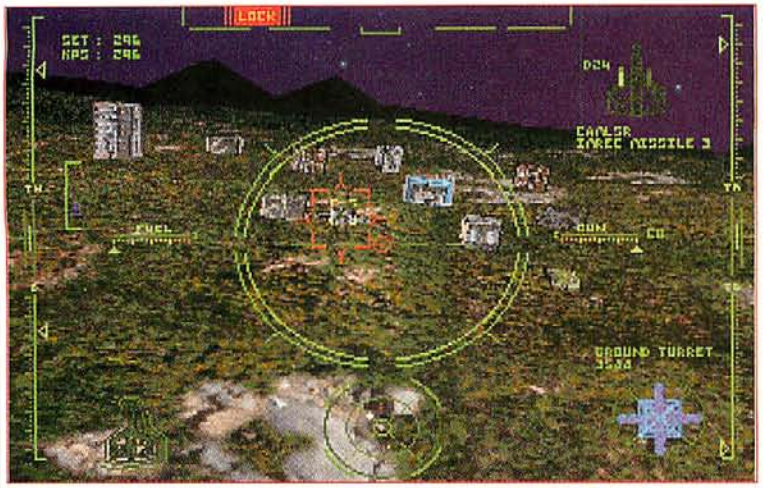
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SAY CHEESE In the photo recon mission, use Smart Targeting to eliminate those pesky ground defenses, then snap away.

you're required to take reconnaissance photos of the ground base in preparation for the next mission, hostage rescue. First take out the SAM sites with your Hellcat's main missiles, then turn your attention to the Banshee fighters. If you detect an incoming missile launch, turn into the missiles and immediately drop a decoy, then veer after using afterburners. Once all threats are eliminated, turn off Smart Targeting and toggle on your cameras, using the H key to avoid accidentally blasting the ground base (and the hostage). If you take less than ten photos, you'll fail the mission and encounter heavy fighter attacks as you return to base.

In the following rescue mission, take out the ground turrets and SAM sites as soon as possible and keep close watch on the transport ship: it's a sitting duck atop the complex. Lose the transport and you'll lose the game.

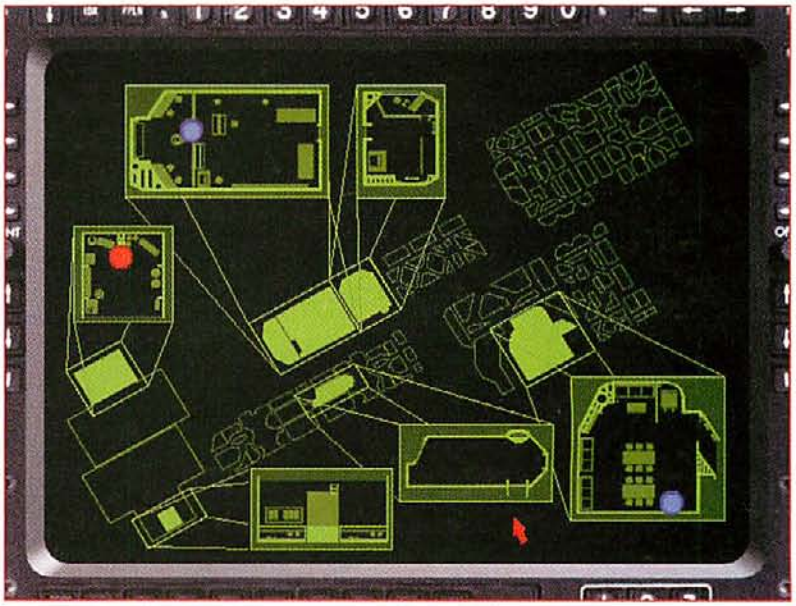
Another ground mission, near the middle of the game, takes place on Circe, where you must prevent 10 hover tanks from destroying the Climate Control Center. They move fast, so be diligent. First, order your wingmen to attack the marauding Hellcats, then concentrate your efforts on the tanks. Choose a fast self-locking missile, such as Image Recognition or Friend-or-Foe, then engage in a series of low-level strafing runs, targeting and firing at multiple tanks as quickly as possible. Don't forget to watch your altitude!

Your first mission in the Orestes system is to save a Border Worlds convoy from pursuing Confed forces. Upon arrival, Confed Cap ships have already launched torpedoes, with more to follow if you don't quickly disable the frigates. One tactic is to immediately order wingmen to attack the Cap ships and concentrate your efforts on the incoming missiles. Afterburn ahead of them (toward the transports), reverse direction and use Stormfire cannons to take out the torpedoes. Don't waste time! The longer it takes to destroy the frigates, the more missiles and Hellcats you'll have to face.

One of the game's first truly difficult missions requires you to infiltrate a Comm station by depositing and retrieving two Manned Insertion Pods while fending off wave after wave of fierce Hellcat attacks. Your first objective should be to destroy the nearby radar buoy, which will limit the total number of Hellcat attacks. This is the first mission in which you'll use Plier's cloaking device. Cloak to avoid immediate detection and take out the radar buoy. Next, launch the two MIPs and turn your attention to the Hellcats. As this mission nears completion, prepare for a stunning blow: success requires that one of your close friends must die. When the MIP signals a launch from the Comm station, drop shields to 75 percent, switch to the Avenger's rear turret and turn on tractor beams. Make sure your ship remains aimed directly at the target MIP, but not too close, then hold down the fire button to draw it into your bay. Turn off cloaking before retrieving the MIP, even if you're under fire, because it's next to impossible to locate the MIP signal on the black-and-white cloaked display.

FIGHTING WORDS

In combat, you'll need to be ready to react instantly. Two of the most potent weapons in your arsenal don't go "boom" at all: the Leech Gun



TALK TO ME To avoid unnecessary legwork, press the M key aboard ship to quickly find crew members eager for conversation.

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THE OMEN Vagabond's first loss at cards sets an eerie mood; foreshadowing plays an important role in many of the game's cinematic scenes.

and Leech Missile. Rather than releasing energy, they absorb it, overloading the target's power system and often rendering it totally disabled. One missile should disable even an Ace-level fighter. Hound their tail and fire quickly before they drop a decoy, otherwise you'll waste a missile. After one hit, your opponent's ship will begin to lose power and slow considerably. Press the Y key to match your target's speed, otherwise you run the risk of overshooting them, or worse, ramming them.

Leech Guns are also highly effective against Cap ships. As you make your run, take note of the percentage counter that appears next to your weapons readout. Usually two or three runs will be enough to bring it up to 100 percent, leaving the behemoth drifting helplessly in space.

Scatterguns, found on the Banshee light fighter, prove especially effective against heavy fighters and bombers. Described as an "ion shotgun," Scatterguns have a much wider spread than most other weapons and are nearly twice as powerful as the Banshee's primary laser cannons. The refire rate may be slower, but because of the wide spread of its five ion blasts, you're more likely to score hits even if your aim is a bit off. The Scattergun is also an excellent choice for taking out Cap ship turrets, as well as the rear turrets of enemy fighters and bombers.

Taking a pounding from enemy fighters? Reduce power allocations to your engine and damage repair to fortify your shields and weapons, then call for wingman assistance (if available). You may lose speed, but your shields and guns will recharge must faster, at least giving you a fighting chance. When the incoming barrage lessens, switch all power to damage repair, but keep a close eye on your radar for more fighters. Remember that you can also lock individual power systems to keep them from draining completely.

An effective tactic when attacking Cap ships with the Banshee or Dragon is to Autoslide (initiated by pressing the Caps Lock key). This lets you turn to face your targets while maintaining a steady forward course. The downside to



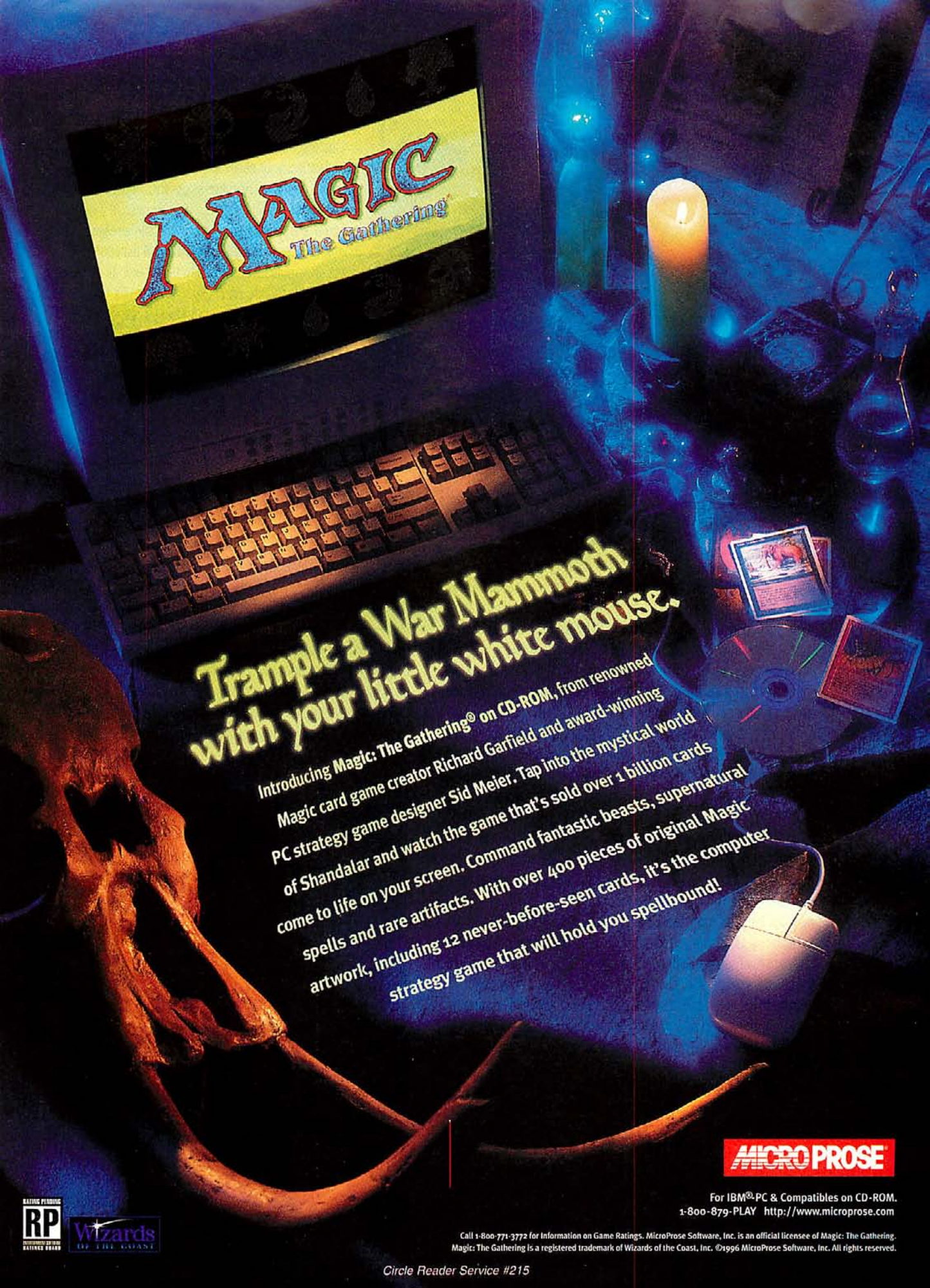
BROTHER'S KEEPER Wingmen play an even greater role in WC4. Choose one with high morale and an aggressive spirit if you want to survive.

Mission Branches

The game world of WC4 is a vast, unfriendly universe, governed by a complex branching storyline. The path you follow is indirectly affected by the remarks you make during cinematic encounters, but mostly by your in-flight performance during combat, covert and recon missions. Game flow is divided into 13 mission series of various length, each containing between 1 and 7 total assignments. Not all missions are essential for completion of the game. In fact, many are dead ends, accessible only if you've followed the wrong course of logic or failed to complete the objectives described in the preliminary briefings. The following chart outlines each series (coded A-G and J-O), the total number of missions available, and how many are crucial to fly a straight path through the game. To view your current location in the game, press Alt-V at any time during spaceflight. For example, B5 indicates you are on the fifth mission of series B.

The game features 48 missions. If you were to chart a direct course from beginning to end, no fewer than 37 of these must be completed. There are two different losing endgame sequences, spread among 19 critical junctures in your overall adventure.

SERIES CODE	TOTAL MISSIONS	CRITICAL MISSIONS
A	1	1
B	6	4
C	3	3
D	3	3
E	2	2
F	3	3
G	3	3
J	3	2
K	7	4
L	7	4
M	4	3
N	5	4
O	1	1



Circle Reader Service #215



DRESSED TO KILL Study your objectives and load the appropriate weapons. Leech missiles help level the odds against bigger, faster opponents.

autoslide is a dangerous vulnerability to attacking fighters. If under attack, releasing autoslide triggers a special maneuver called Slide & Pop, which causes your ship to immediately head in the direction its nose is pointing. Skilled pilots can use Slide & Pop to elude persistent enemy ships and instantly change the angle of attack during dogfights.

Rookie pilots are most likely to waste shots by firing at the first sign of enemy radar blip. The trick is not to fly too fast (overshooting your target) or too slow (he'll zoom by so fast, you'll never draw a reliable bead). Instead, lock the target and immediately match his speed. Watch for the ITTS indicator to turn red, which signals a sure hit, before firing. Broadside attacks are often a matter of luck as much as skill; head-on attacks ensure greater success, but are mutually dangerous to friend and foe. The best tactic is to lock a target and ride its tail. If you find this role reversed, with an enemy fighter hounding your tail, switch to the rear turrets (if so equipped). Although most rear turreted fighters have automatic defense systems, manual targeting is usually more accurate.

Attack Bearcats from above and avoid using autoslide; their auto-tracking turrets will cut you to ribbons. Hellcats are pesky opponents, thanks to their rapid shield regeneration. For this reason, if you score a few hits on a single ship, stick to it like glue and blast away until destroyed. Hellcats and Banshees are deadly in numbers, especially when they group behind you. Drop some mines or use the Slide & Pop technique to reverse direction, allow them to pass, then pop back on their six.

Avengers and Thunderbolts have deadly maneuverability. Use your Leeching arsenal to slow them down to a crawl, then attack from above. Both Thunderbolts and Vindicators are known for their kamikaze tactics; if they can't shoot you down, they'll try to ram you. If you're flying a Dragon, you'll be able to see other Dragons even if they are cloaked—just look for the telltale outline (or damage sparks, if they've been hit) and pound away.

OFFICE POLITICS

Character interaction in key cinematic sequences won't directly affect your ability to win the game. Your reactions to dialogue prompts—negative or positive, cool or hot-headed—will, however, sometimes raise or lower morale among individual crew members. Keep in mind that some responses are merely red herrings, adding spice to the dialogue with no effect on temperament or loyalty. In fact, not all characters have variable morale, particularly new recruits from the Border Worlds. Wingmen suffering from low morale—such as Catscratch, Panther and Hawk—are less likely to jump at your command or give it their all during combat. You can ascertain a wingman's morale during in-flight chatter: If their response is exuberant, they're flying high; if they seem indifferent, they've got the deep-space blues.

Often the outcome of your actions won't be felt until much later in the game. Because the game constantly blurs the line between allies and villains, a pilot or commander you upset in conversation may one day prove to be your mortal enemy. Choose to confront Seether during the opening bar fight, for example, and he'll be extra aggressive in your final meeting. Ignore him, on the other hand, and he'll taunt your willingness to stand up for your beliefs.

Though this may seem rather vague, the best advice is to follow your heart—or in this case, the true nature of the lead character, Blair. Remember that loyalty isn't always defined by duty, but by the person. Perhaps more than any previous game in the series, you have to be a good judge of human nature and character motivation. Reward admiration with quiet compassion, yet learn to temper your aggression when confronted with a potentially volatile encounter.

Space Chicken

Many WC4 missions saddle you with seemingly impossible objectives, outnumbered and overwhelmed by enemy forces. What's a red-blooded, resourceful spacefighter to do? Cheat, of course. Just don't tell anyone—especially Maniac.

The most radical alternation you can make is aptly called Chicken Mode. At the DOS command prompt, type: WC4 -chicken. You'll know you're in business if the program loads with the line, "Chicken Mode [ON] Boc Boc!" Now during space and ground combat, you can press Ctrl-W to instantly destroy a targeted ship. Pressing Ctrl-Alt-W will destroy all enemies on your radar. Unscrupulous pilots can use this to virtually walk through the game, although you must still work through the non-combat sequences as normal. A more ethical use of Chicken Mode would be a last-ditch attempt to surmount some of the game's more frustrating missions.

Note that although Chicken Mode has no effect on game flow or final outcome, any enemies destroyed by this secret weapon do not count on your kill board. Be aware that cheating can also backfire on you, destroying enemy installations whose capture or infiltration is critical to completing your mission objective.

Origin has stated that "unofficial" command line cheats and hacked TSRs could cause the program to crash and worse, possibly damage data files, forcing you to reinstall the product and start from scratch.

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CLAW AND FANG

A Tale of Ghost Bear Vengeance

by Martin E. Cirulis

Mech training. Where your mind must become one with your machine. Experience can impart more wisdom than 1,000 instruction manuals. So, Cadet, read through the transcript below, from a matrix discovered by a Scavenger unit circa 3058. Many entries were lost, but you'll discover that it not only contains tactical references to pre-merger technology Mech combat, but also valuable insights into the soc/pol state of Humanity during the Clan Era, directly before the coming of The Fury. You'll find it a worthy reference for the MECHWARRIOR 2 expansion module, GHOST BEAR'S LEGACY.

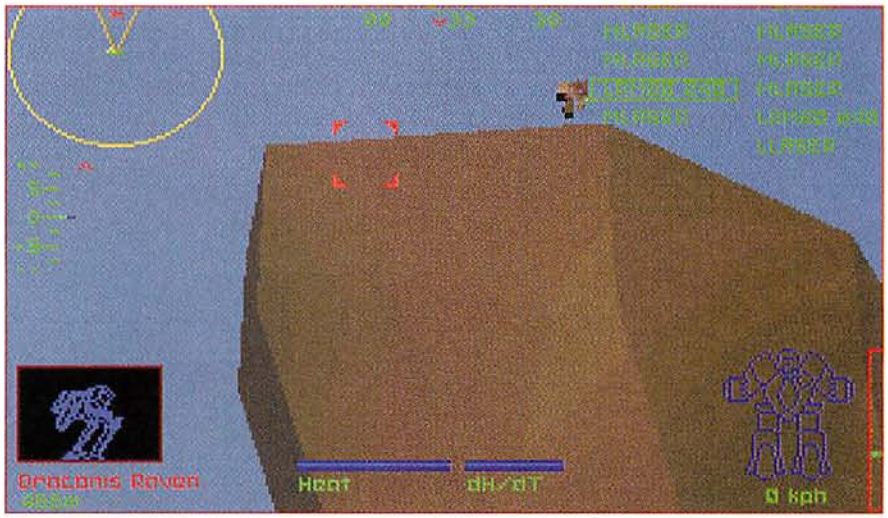
Entry 23 (Mission 1): I won my Right of Position with ease. My choice of a Timber Wolf with a double LRM load was perfect, and not only did I shatter the Horned Owl that first came at me across the frozen trial arena, but I was able to put down the Grizzly that waited behind the hills as well.

Entry 24 (*Mission 2—Defend on Mennendorf*): If I were one of the Inner Sphere rabble who pilot Mechs, I would be off getting intoxicated somewhere. I have fought my first actual field combat and brought honor to my Clan. We were told that there were renegade MechWarriors, little more than pirates, in the area, and that guarding the new HPG array was important duty. In my arrogance, I considered this mere talk to help the untried save face. I was wrong.

Just after dawn, HPG security reported two Mercenary Mechs approaching from the south, a 35-ton Raven scouting for an Atlas, a formidable assault-class Mech despite inferior Inner Sphere technology. My Starmates raced to engage but something held me back in my TimberWolf, studying my readouts. They had to see that they were outnumbered and outgunned—and yet they loitered, a kilometer away from the HPG, drawing my Starmates into a close-quarter fight. As much as I wanted my share of the glory, the situation stank of Stravag trickery, and so I maintained station, using my LRM's in the support fire mode.

Just as I watched the Merc Atlas shudder with an internal explosion, my proximity sensors went off. From the top of the cliffs behind the HPG Array jumped four Ravens. They had used ECM to get close and then powered up to full attack mode once they thought their feint had drawn off our Mechs. As they fell upon the base, firing at will, I was upon them like a bear roused early from his sleep. Their light armor was no match for my high-energy claws, and before their relief force could fight through my distant Starmates, I had reduced the four backstabbers to so much burning metal. With the base safe I was free to switch back to my LRM racks and ravage the distant heavy Mechs.

Entry 27 (*Mission 3—Trial of Position*) The Draconis Combine has torn the heart from The Bear. We may be the strongest Clan now, but with our genetic heritage stolen there is no future for the Ghost Bear. There will be no Terra for our Clan, there will be no survival, unless we can retrieve the genes of our ancestors.



BEARING DOWN A flock of Ravens come to pick the bones of the Bear HPG station. Wait until these cowards hit the ground and tear them apart at close range.

All non-garrison units have been recalled to Alshain to compete in a Trial of Combat to determine who will receive the honor of Questing. After a week of nearly constant combat, it is down to us and Zherinov's Star. I have been told that Zherinov will field a Marauder, a Warhawk and command from his Naga. Through careful study of simulations I have decided that come tomorrow, I will vector my Starmates to engage the Naga at close range while I destroy the WarHawk at long range. I have earned the right to use a Kodiak and will be taking the LRM-20 rack and

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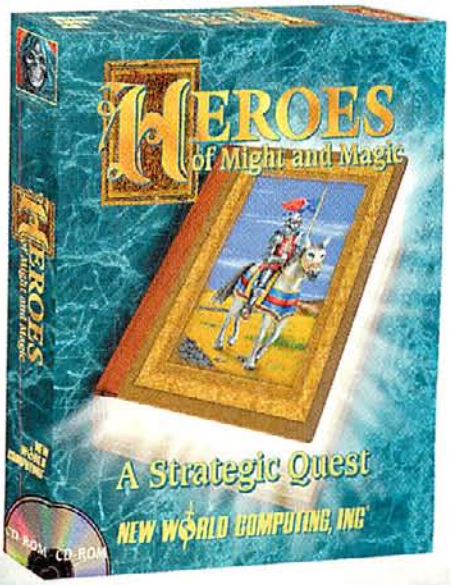
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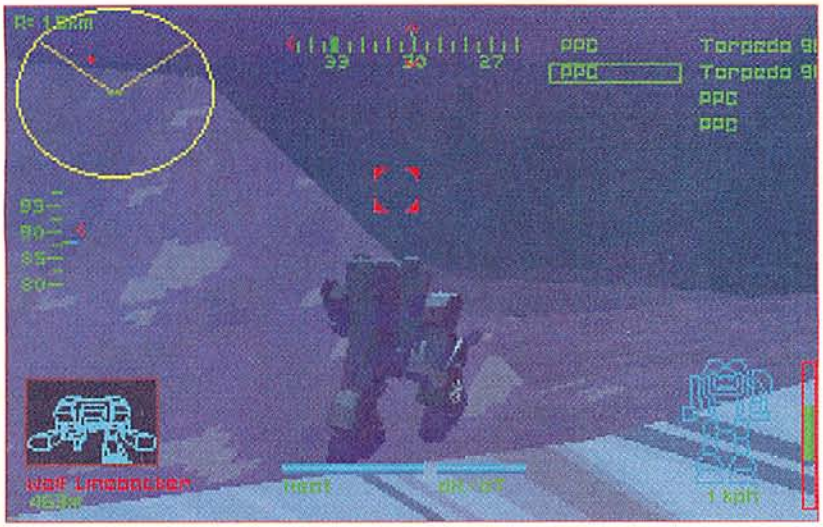






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CLIFF HANGER Make your stand against the other two heavy Wolf Mechs from behind this upturned ridge.

Anti-missile system modifications. May Kerensky grant me the skill I need to win victory, and the right to save my Clan from Inner Sphere treachery.

Entry 28 (*Mission 4—Defend Dropship*): No sooner had my Star won the Right of Combat than our Dropship was beset by Draconis Forces. The cowards chose to drop from the skies, but this time they had the firepower of a lance of Victors led by an Atlas. Thank Ursa, I retained the modified Kodiak for this mission. The fighting was so fierce we nearly failed to notice a group of solitary soldiers in primitive battle-suits as they carried Nuclear Demolition charges toward our Dropship's hull. Without waiting for a lock, I sprayed the ground around our ship with LRM fire, eradicating the battle-suits before they could arm the bombs.

Nuclear Weapons! I could barely believe it as the Techs decontaminated our Mechs. No wonder the Inner Sphere is in chaos. They are like mad beasts, not warriors. The Kurultai was right to withdraw Batchall for the duration of this quest. These monsters are too dangerous to afford them honor.

Entry 31 (*Mission 7, 8—Raid on Wolcott, Circle of Equals*): The raid on Wolcott went bad from the start. I ordered my Starmate in her Kodiak to destroy the Draconis Atlas on guard, while my faster TimberWolf searched for the Draconis General's Mech—but before I could get a lock, I was beset by pairs of Ravens that failed to show up on my scanners. Somehow the Draconis techs had discovered a way to confuse our lock-on computers, and I was forced to dodge through the trees, aiming with my eyes alone.

Clan weaponry and armor helped carry me through the ambushes. But, no sooner had I given my word to the Draconis General that he would not be killed if he told us where the Mechs that had stolen our gene banks had come from, when my commander called and ordered me to declare vengeance on the man. Seeing that the general's violent death now would serve no purpose other than dooming the entire Ghost Bear Clan, I refused. The information was given to me and the Khan herself has blessed my actions, but I must nonetheless face my own commander in a Trial of Grievance.

As much as it pains me, I know him now to be a fool. He chooses a heavy Mech while I stay with my familiar TimberWolf. As he charges straight in, hoping to overwhelm my armor, I retrograde at full speed on a tangent course while pouring rack after rack of LRM fire into him.

Entry 46 (*Mission 14—Underwater Strike*): Immediately after touching down on the murky seabed, I turned left and climbed the short ridge in front of me. From the top, closest to the cliff face I spotted an enemy Linebacker on a 345 bearing. It was shut down, and though I could barely resist the urge to call the pilot out for honorable battle, I knew that the underwater modifications had left my Mech unable to take even one unnecessary hit. Instead of behaving like a Ristar, I acted like the lowest Dezgra and maneuvered slowly to expose the Linebacker without leaving the safety of my ridge. Then, with a Surkai on my lips I fired four PPC's straight into his cockpit. The comm didn't even carry a scream.



BIRD HUNTING Hunting Ravens amidst the trees of Walcott. You can't get a target lock on them, so you'd better get close and brutal with them before they pick you apart.

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HONOR FIRST No matter what your leader says, don't bust into this base and shoot up the Draconis General's Mech. Make an honorable deal with him instead, as he's worth far more alive than dead.

I charged forward, planning to use the explosion and steam as cover, but when I reached the wreckage, two more heavy Mechs activated at 90 degrees relative and I was forced to take cover there behind an upward slope in the cliff. As the enemy fire exploded uselessly against the cliff from below, I edged forward and waited for them to pull back before I let fly with my torpedoes over the lip of the cliff. Once they were both crippled I leapt down and finished them off quickly with PPC fire.

Twice, on the way to find the stolen Draconis Mechs, I found myself having to take cover from wings of attack subs. Though capable of deadly PPC fire, the subs were large and vulnerable to partially aimed barrage from my weapons. I would charge to the top of a hill, unleash two or three fusillades, and then back down the shielding side before I could be incinerated.

Once in the cave complex I switched to enhanced imaging to help me gauge the winding passages, and used the satellite map to precisely plan my ambushes of the Mechs responsible for the theft of our precious birthright. Thanks to my raid we finally come to the end of this chase. The mad Crusader splinter of the Wolf Clan is responsible; their dreams of conquest require genes for future warriors. Their Khan banished them and denied them children, so the Stravag took ours.

Entry 65 (*Mission 17—Destroy Orbital Platform*): I retrieved the cells of our ancestors successfully, but still it was not enough.

My Kodiak was modified for the space assault by adding jump jets of four rating, and refitted with PPCs and barrage-class medium pulse lasers. No missiles, as the action promised to be too fast for lock-ons to be achieved.

I emerged from the airlock to an incredible storm of fire from four of the Wolf Platform's turrets. The only way to find cover was to jet straight up against the platform's hull above me, switch to group fire and quickly destroy the two turrets on my rear flanks. Falling back to my dropship I ran and engaged the forward turret while keeping the platform's belly between me and the last turret until I was ready to destroy it at my leisure.

I switched to enhanced imaging to see where the hull breach was, and jetted carefully up through it, emerging to face four Wolf heavy mechs at close range. Three bursts of group fire were enough to destroy the charging TimberWolf; then I backed into a shielded corner, destroying each enemy Mech as they came at me. My sensor revealed a Rhino waiting in the reactor room itself, but my concept of honor has changed so much that I decided to allow the pilot to meet his fate with the station. Knowing I would have less than a minute to get free, I sighted on the reactor wall unit from the cargo bay, using the connecting corridor. A few short bursts ruptured the core, and I spun and raced for the hull breach. As tempting as it was to go at flank speed, I resisted, knowing that the zero-G conditions would send me careening over the exit instead of down it.

As I drifted downwards I triggered the autopilot and set the throttle at four, so the moment I touched down on my Dropship's hull, the computer would take me to the airlock most efficiently. The lock doors were almost safely closed when everything went bright white, and the dream of the mad Wolves died forever.

(Garbled matrix.) ...eward my genes will be preserved for future generations, but would the Khan so ordered if she knew of my dou...

...another way? Are we better off being again as we...

...ssions of the warriors of the Inner Sphere. Love, hate, birth...

...Stravag all but....wonder?

It is not known if this warrior survived to fight the Long Retreat. The last fragments of the journal are intriguing. Could he have sensed what was coming?

I am probably mistaken. How could they have continued their useless little wars amongst themselves if even one knew The Fury was coming out of the dark for them all?

New Mechs In Town

GHOST BEAR'S LEGACY provides a slew of new (and old) Mechs to fight with, as well a couple of nasty vehicular surprises. Mech-jocks would do well to pummel the Schrek PPC tanks at very long range while moving at a tangent, and you will only make the mistake of coming too close to an SRM-Carrier once.

The Inner Sphere designs are nice to see, especially Old-timers like the Atlas and Victor, but as far as the new Clan jobs, the only one that competes with the TimberWolf is the Kodiak assault Mech. The standard configs are all right, but I prefer to downgrade the Auto-cannon to a 10 and slap in a large LRM rack and an Anti-missile battery.


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Circle Reader Service #214

IT'S ABOUT TIME

A Private Tour Of Capstone's CHRONOMASTER

by Charles Ardai

The time is out of joint;
O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!
—Hamlet

They used to say that time waits for no man, but that was in the days before stasis bombs could freeze an entire universe in an instant. Those were better days, Jester.

Why do you say that, Korda? You couldn't have made a fortune as a designer of pocket universes back then, sweetie.

Fine, maybe not better. But easier.

Your life's pretty easy, Sugar Pop. You're retired.

What does that mean, Jester? A crisis comes up, Earth still calls me in to solve it. Remember when those two universes were thrown into stasis, and we got a tip that five more were going to be sabotaged? Didn't matter that I was retired then.

You were very brave, sweetie.

Maybe so–but brave ain't easy.

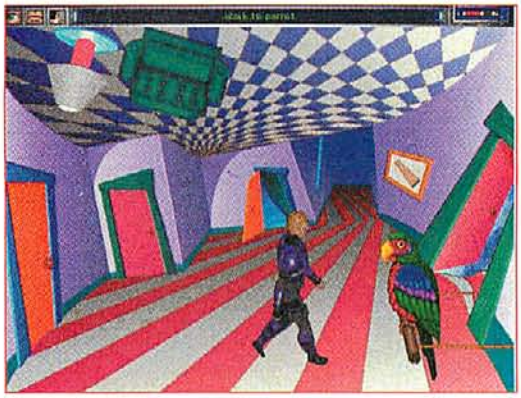
What was so hard?

What wasn't? Let me jog your memory...

THE BURBS OF URBS

First came the call from Earth. I networked with my fellow designers to find out more, but everyone was in the dark. Two worlds had been shut down, and the designer of five others had died mysteriously. I picked at random: I'd deal with Urbs first, Aurans after.

The job of restarting a frozen world is a tricky one. First you have to set up a resonance tracer at magnetic north and then you follow its signal to the hidden World Key. Only then can you untangle the problem causing the stasis and get the gears moving again.



TIME FOR A CHAT In the time-twisted pocket universes of CHRONOMASTER, it never hurts to ask questions of anyone–even parrots squawk out the truth occasionally.

On Urbs, a huge statue was blocking magnetic north. Exposure to the bottled time I carried animated the statue, but I couldn't convince it to move until I faced it wearing the uniform and insignia of the Urbs army. A uniform was easy to acquire: dead soldiers lay strewn about the battlefield at a nearby fort. A general's insignia was on display in the museum, but a laser security system made that harder to nab. After I uncrated an antique shield and found a rag, though, I was able to polish it off.

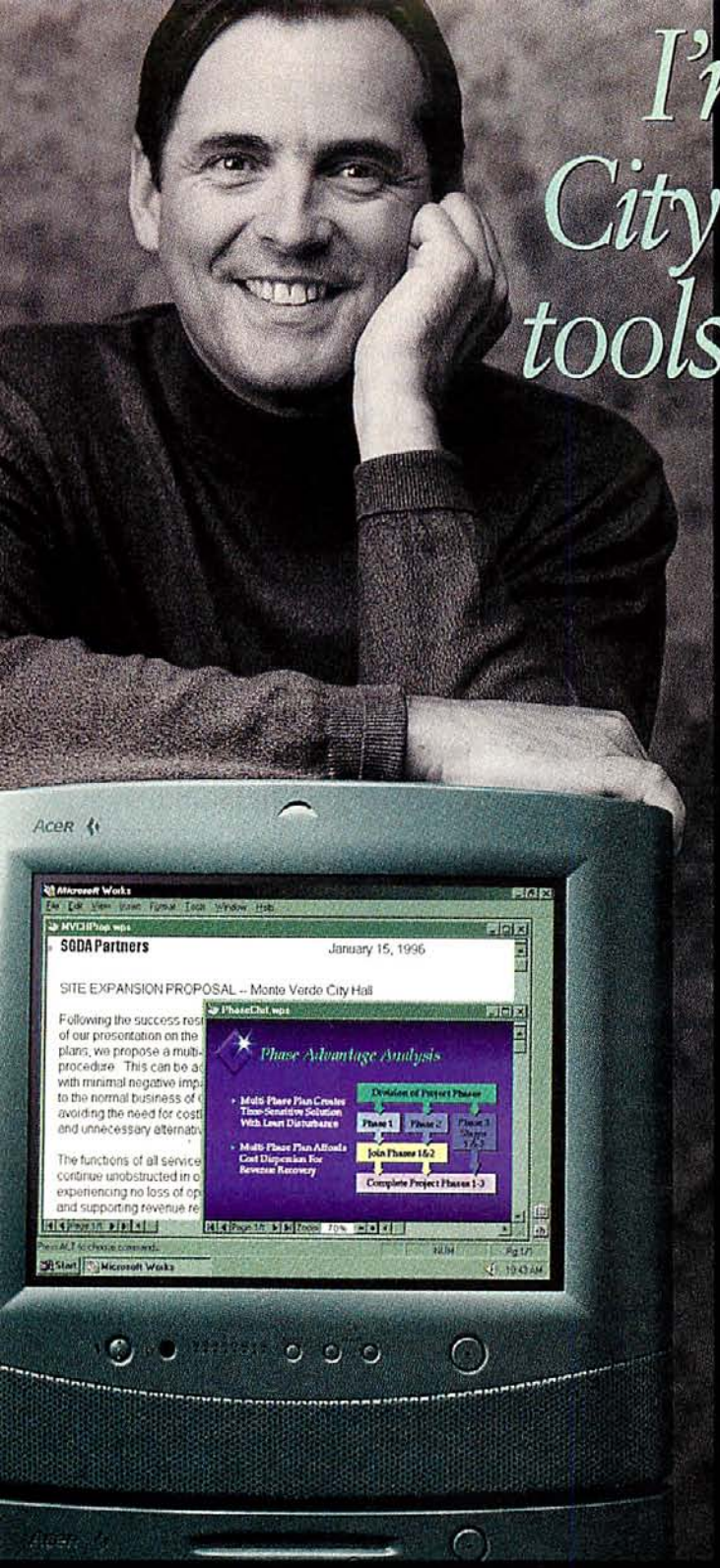
After raising the flag of Urbs' enemies in the park, I woke the statue again and it moved. The resonance tracer pointed me back toward the fort, where my insignia got me past a scanner and into an armory. A bound prisoner stood before the frozen beams of a robotic firing squad, and I knew that if I passed too close the beams would emerge from stasis and complete their deadly path. Fortunately, I found a way to shield the prisoner from them. In gratitude, he gave me a tip I could use on Aurans.

Checking my Direction Finder, I found my way to an elevator and from there to a nuclear reactor guarded by one loyal guard and one faltering guard. I knew that on a world like Urbs, it was the loyal guard I had to back. Sure enough, the Key appeared, taking the form of a sliding-tile puzzle. Piece of cake. Facing down the ruling council after stasis was lifted was harder, but a combination of bluffing and discreet respect did the trick. My sentence of execution was commuted.

THE WARRENS OF AURANS

Magnetic North on Aurans, like everything else on this desert world, was buried under the sand. When I tried to place my machinery, I dislodged a bottle and woke the six angry jinn imprisoned inside. They demanded to be fed the "Dates of Fasting" and flew me to a fruit-rich oasis. But which fruit was I to pick? Fortunately, my ship has detailed files on Earth religions, and I was able to choose the right meal.

A trip to the canyons brought me face-to-face with a rockslide, quicksand sinkholes, and a ravenous Ketter beast, all frozen in mid-movement. Fancy footwork got me past the first two, but I had to feed the beast a carcass from the oasis (along with some bottled time) to get it to leave the scene. Once it was gone, I took some tiles and a turban from the nomad it had mauled. The turban would come in handy



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building can be. Luckily, my new Acer® Aspire™ helps me do the impossible. If I need to be across town at a planning meeting, Aspire's integrated speakerphone puts me right in the boardroom. But, I can still be at my desk at home, working on a materials budget at the same time.



In fact, Aspire is loaded with features that help me get things done. Like the full color, CD-ROM multimedia presentation that wowed the City Council, and got me into this mess in the first place. Acer must understand I'm busy, because they simplified setup and preloaded all the software. I didn't have much more than the five minutes it took to get Aspire up and running. But now I've got all the time in the world to build my career from the ground up.

A few more things I can do with my Aspire:

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when confronting harsh desert weather, though I had to mend it first.

On a plateau near a lake, I found Arabou the Trader, whom the prisoner on Urbs had spoken of. Talking with him proved fruitful: he gave me a magic flute and magic sandals. The sandals got me across the spider-webs in the cavern, and a bit more elbow grease got me out of the maze that lay past them. Then the flute helped me go mano-a-mano with the giant spider in the nomad camp. Facing down the nomad chief required a more conventional weapon–fortunately, as long as I was dressed like one of them, their guard was willing to lend me a sword.



GOTTA BE THE SHOES Arabou gives you sandals that let you negotiate the cavern webs. Why? He likes those cool purple threads you wear.

Generous people, nomads. Another lent me her veil, and after I fortified it with my Universal Tool it got me past the mirages that blocked my way to the palace. Once inside, I visited the bathing pool (where my tiles came in handy, once I used the flute to get rid of another bather) and the treasury (where I heeded the warning not to take too much). The harem was my next stop, but first I had to pass a guard and another Ketter beast. What would satisfy each? Well, I didn't need the sword any more, and no beast could refuse a nap after lapping up some of the pool's calming waters.



OUT ON THE TILES Best keep your Universal Tool out of the Nomad's swimming pool.

The World Key was in the harem, waiting only for me to give up the bottle before it revealed itself. The crest of Aurans needed to be rebuilt; fortunately, I'd seen it often enough, and jigsaw puzzles have never held me up for long.

VIVA FORTUNA!

But the crisis wasn't over. The saboteur had made it to Fortuna, planet of a thousand games of chance. I got there and found the enemy's ship right out in the open–but it was impossible to enter even after I'd tricked the ship into eliminating the service droid that blocked my path.

The casino, on the other hand, was simple to enter. I tried my hand at a few games, first using my Universal Tool and a lucky rabbit's foot I bought at the bar to improve my chances. I also talked to the bartender about the race Fortuna's ruler intended to participate in later in the day, and to the band, which told me it would help me out if I found them a new glifnod. Fortuitously, one of the ugly musical instruments was for sale at the security counter. I played it like a pro, and the band gave me a tip in return.

Next, after using the camera I'd found in the bar to duplicate a guard's badge, I used the fake badge to bum a ride on the subway. Speaking of bums, a ragged guy in the subway gave me a tip I parlayed into a nice gambling win, and helped me find the extra ace that came in so handy (when paired with the other ace I'd found in the casino) during the Wild West poker game I wound up in at the end of the subway line. Magnetic north happened to be in the saloon, and my tools told me once again that the World Key was back where I'd come from.

When I arrived at the casino, I found one guard knocked out and, after hunting through the maze of ducts and corridors she'd been guarding, the rest of the security staff tied up next to a live bomb. Showing one of them my badge quieted their fears, and covering the bomb deadened the explosion. We reactivated the monitors in time to catch the saboteur using his password to open his ship. (My Universal Tool, bless it, helped me make out what he said.)

The ship opened just as easily when I said it, revealing a partially constructed stasis bomb and a lockpick I was able to hammer into just the right shape to get me past the one locked door in the tunnels. I walked in on the saboteur–Milo was his name–but he won me over just in time to prevent me from arresting him. A grave injustice had been done, it seemed, and he was just righting powerful wrongs. I made a quick decision: I agreed to join him.

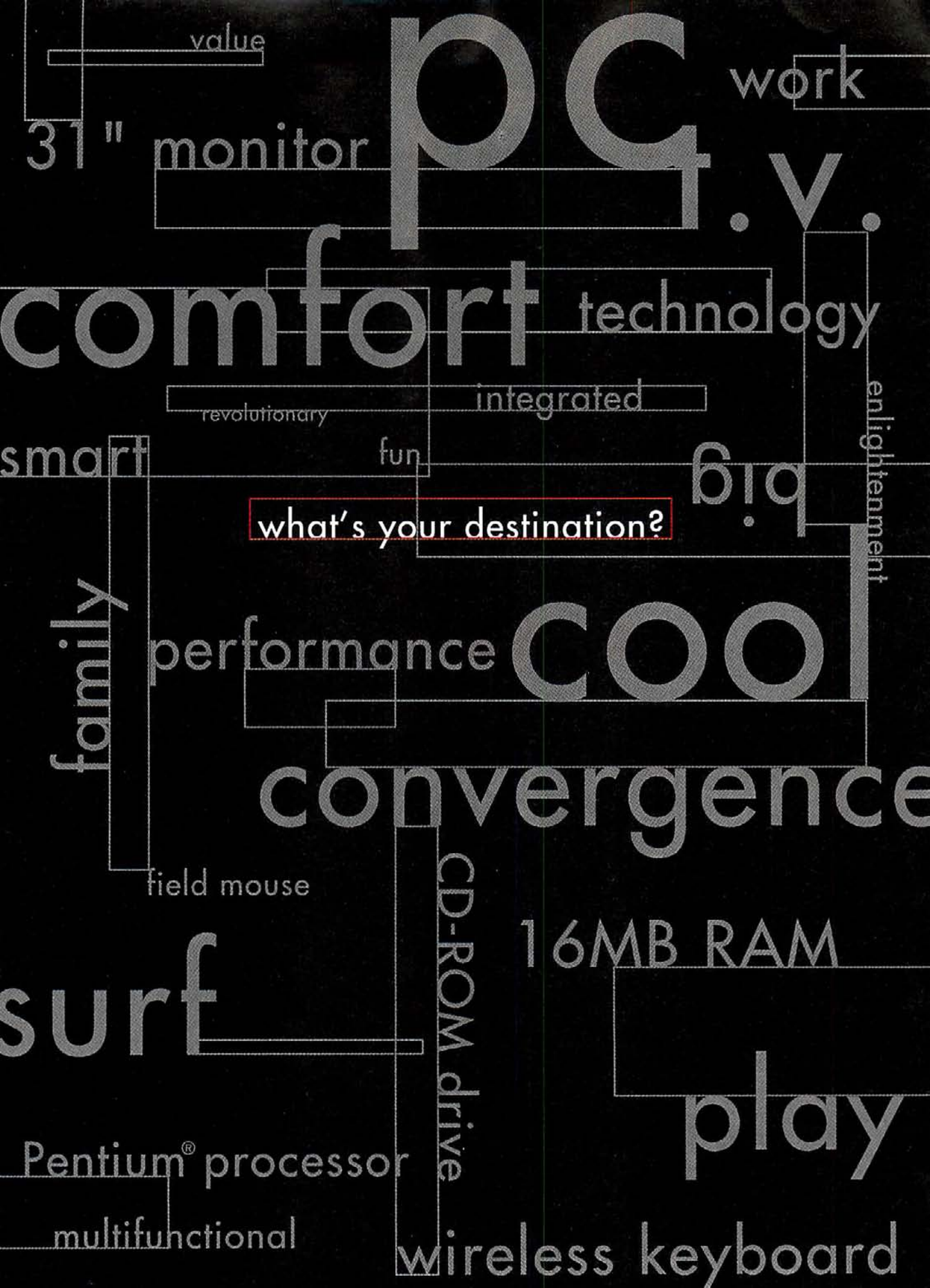
I unraveled Fortuna's glifnod-like World Key puzzle, then joined forces with Milo to beat Fortuna's ruler in his race. (Milo's stasis bomb helped, once I finished it with a piece of hardware I'd found under a floor panel near the security room.) Then we split up, Milo heading to Jungen and I to the magical world of Cabal.

THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

There were four planets in the Cabal system: Glitter, Glass, Gem, and Forge. Glitter looked pleasant enough, until a local witch challenged me to a deadly game of "Hangman." The winning phrase told me something about this universe's ruler, Avalon Greer; but that aside, I was glad to escape with my life.

I also left with an "Animate" spell, which proved useful when I had to move the witch's cat off her bookshelf so that I could learn more of her spells. There was plenty more to take, too: a knife, a clam, a watering can, plus a bucketful of tasty clam chowder. The chowder hit the spot when I traveled to Forge and had to convince a hungry dwarf to let me into his mines.

In the mines, I had my second chance to set up my resonance tracer, and again I was rewarded with a puzzling line of prose in lieu of directions to Cabal's World Key. The same thing happened on Glass, when I set up my machinery in the Temple of the Phoenix (after teaching its


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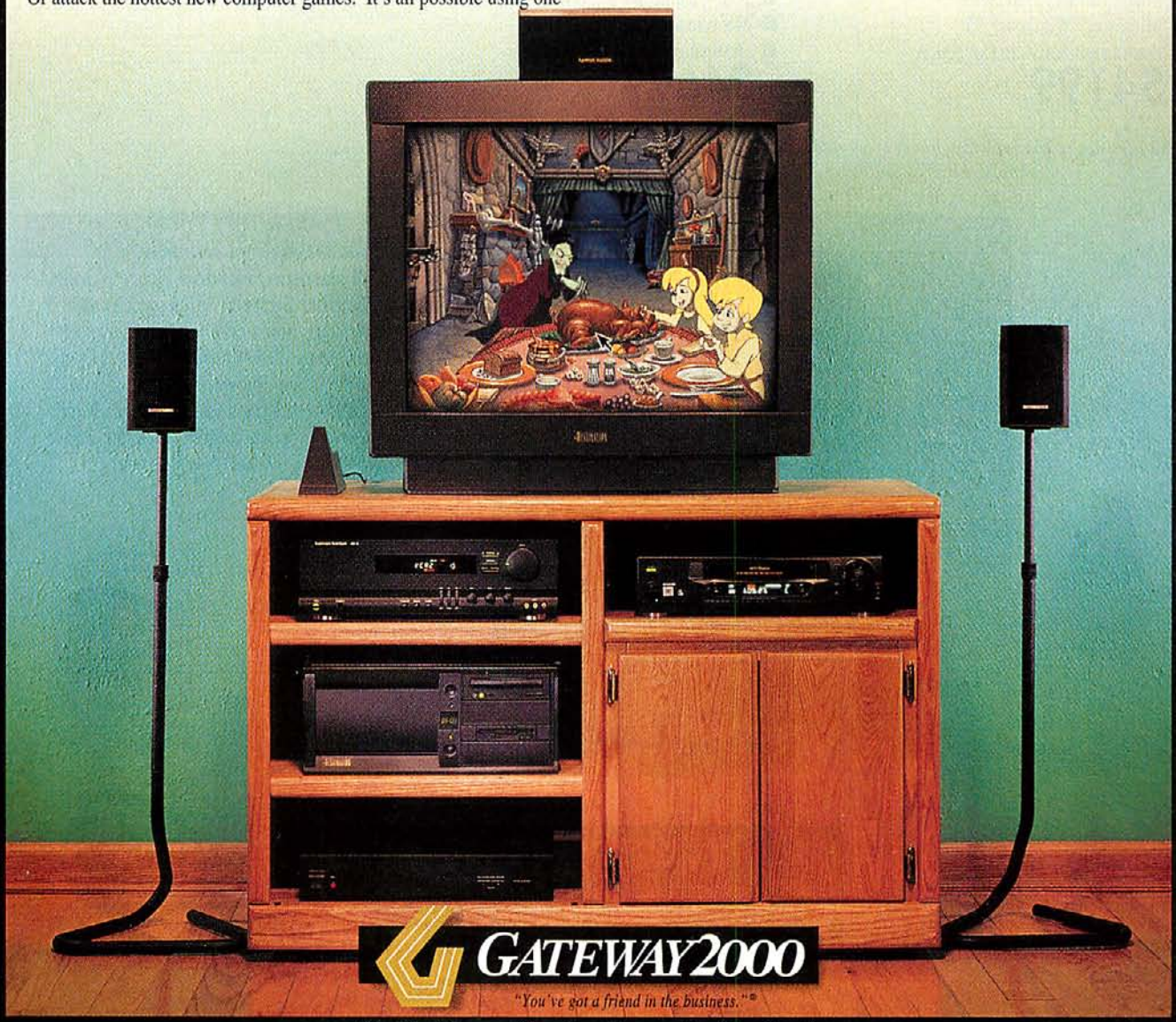


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GIVE UP THE BOTTLE The World Key is in the harem–where else would the maker of a pocket universe keep his most private possession?

guardians what they wanted to know and making the necessary obeisances), and again on Gem once I'd used the frozen harp to move the unicorn statue out of the way. Four puzzling lines, no directions. Or were they the directions? I recited them and found my machinery working normally once again.

Two new locations were open to me. Before tangling with Avalon Greer, I decided to investigate Cabal's glorious volcano. A strange tableau greeted me: floating bubbles, sturdy and huge, one with a bedroom set inside. I returned to Forge to borrow the dwarf king's bubble wand and then used it to transport myself to the largest bubble. A young woman lay in the bed; when she rose she turned out to be Greer's daughter, and was eager to help me rescue her father from the evil spell he'd cast on himself. Her tips helped me capture Greer's floating spy, the "crystal eye," and then her kiss turned it into a tool I could use to defeat him. When I confronted him in his tower, he surrendered.

All that was left, after I sent Milo some warnings that would help him on Jungen, was to solve Cabal's World Key puzzle. This time it was a potion rather than a spell I had to cook up. First, I planted the flower from the bubble in the witch's garden, then I watered it and collected its seed and planted that. When it magically burgeoned, I entered it and used the cauldron I found inside to mix water, fire, wind, and earth, plus some powder I'd made from one of the crystals I'd pried from the wall.

I drank, and was done with Cabal. But neither the worst nor the strangest was behind me.

WELL, HELLO DALI

At least Cabal had been internally consistent, had made sense once you accepted the rules of its magic. Verdry was a mess. It looked ordinary enough at first, but soon you found that it was mad: no two locations fit together sensibly, no one behaved rationally. It was like a dream.

I started out in a garden, where my Universal Tool enabled me to talk to the plants. I collected bits of each plant while I was at it, just in case. After a series of conversations pointing me towards a magnetic north I was otherwise unable to locate, I returned to my ship. (Easier said than done: I had to grow another plant just so that I could move a block of stone into position to facilitate my escape.)

Following the plants' advice, I navigated to the asteroid located at the



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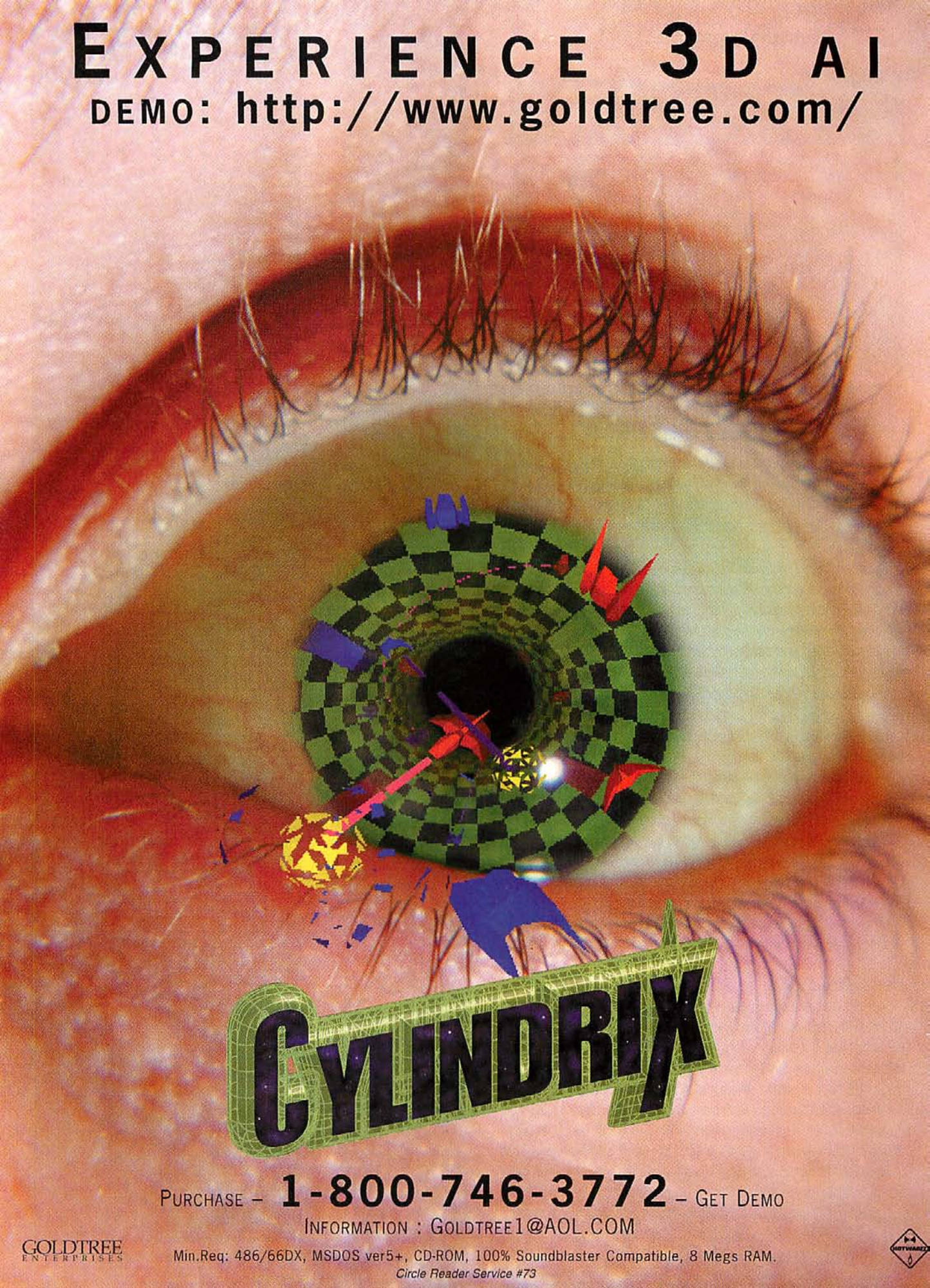
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intersection of two celestial patterns. There I was able to take a reading that pointed me toward the location of the World Key.

A strange monster blocked my path when I returned to Verdry's gardens, but I was able to communicate with it by pounding away on a makeshift drum I fashioned out of a hollow stump and some plant bits. Through the gates the beast had guarded, I found a maze of rooms containing odd, incongruous objects: refrigerators and eyes on long stalks, a mailbox and upside-down metal mountains, funhouse mirrors and a boy in knee-pants. In each room I had to collect a wooden stair. In the mailbox room, I had a stair sent to me by rearranging the letters in a note I received. In the refrigerator room, I traded a table leaf I'd gotten in the waterfall room for the stair that was wedged in its place. And so on, until I had all but one of the stairs I needed.



DARK & DEADLY Cabal is internally consistent, ethereally beautiful, and utterly dangerous.

The last one required me to capture the ruler of Verdry, which I did using a corker of a trick I'd learned watching the jinn on Aurans, and then to catch a moving picture show, after a fashion. (That puzzle looked to be difficult, but I nailed it.) The stairs brought me to the World Key, which took the shape of a collection of timepieces. Here at last I was in my element. I synchronized the clocks and then stopped time.

ROLLING THE DYCE

Milo rejoined me for our attack on our foes' sanctuary, a violent world hidden inside an enormous Dyson Sphere. I did a little mechanical tinkering with the sphere's main entrance, and then used my powers of recall to foil the computerized security system.

The ruler of Urbs greeted us with gunfire as soon as we were inside, but a bit of tampering with his mechanized biosuit (which I carried out while Milo kept him distracted) put him out of commission.

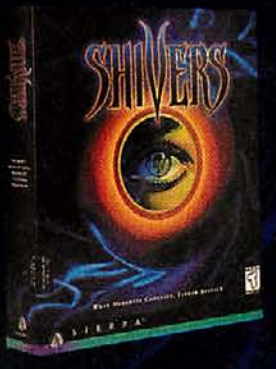
We explored the city, turning up a seedy "chop shop" where people could buy bio-mechanical body modifications. I boned up on the surgical techniques until I knew enough to help the chief surgeon. In return for the help and our pointing him toward the biosuit we'd just liberated, he paid me $50,000.

Next, we went to the city's largest estate, a high-security mansion outfitted with a room for the ruler of each of the worlds I'd been to. The Fortuna room featured giant dice, half a lottery ticket, and a coin lost between the sofa cushions; I also took a circuit board from the large-screen TV. The

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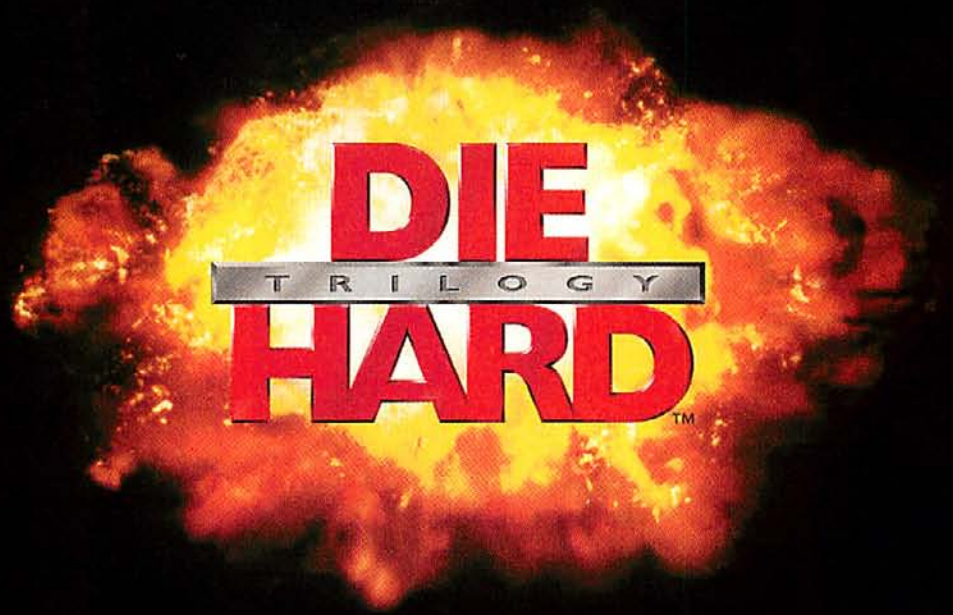
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NATURE'S HANGOVER Bees that talk and eyes on stalks are but a few examples of Verdry's esoteric world structure. Keep your head, talk calmly to the plants, and remember what the jinn taught you.

Cabal room featured wooden torches an a banquet table, as well as a locked chest. The key was under the chest, and a door key was inside it. I took the door key, along with some food for the road.

The key opened the Verdry room, which held more of the world's concentrated lunacy than I could stand to look at. I smashed all the glass I could find (including the funny glasses on the jack-in-the-box), and used the coin to get an eyeball out of the gumball machine in the corner. A mushroom appeared, and I used a surgical clamp to pull it out of the ground. Another key was revealed, along with a flute that looked like Arabou's.

This key opened the Urbs room, where a spare biosuit waited to be activated. Once I fixed it with the panel I'd pulled out of Fortuna's TV set, it helped me smash open the door to the Aurans room. Milo, who'd been captured when we reached the estate, was tied up inside and guarded by both a Ketter beast and the nomad chief from Aurans. The flute got me through this tense standoff, and the food I'd grabbed from Avalon Greer's banquet got me past the beast. I collected Milo and the other half of the Fortuna lottery ticket, and we flew off for our final showdown.

Before we could buy passage to the center of Dyce, we needed to cash in the winning lottery ticket; fortunately, a one-eyed robot was at the head of the winners' line and ceded his place to us in return for the eye I'd gotten in the Verdry room. We flew to the final hideout of the final villain, where I used my resonance tracer and Universal Tool to solve the World Key puzzle and throw Dyce into stasis. But the villain himself was harder to catch, since he carried bottled time. When I grappled with him, he had the upper hand–but he forgot about my foot. I kicked, and his time ran out.

IF I HAD WORLD ENOUGH, AND TIME...

So, you see, Jester, retirement isn't all rest and relaxation.

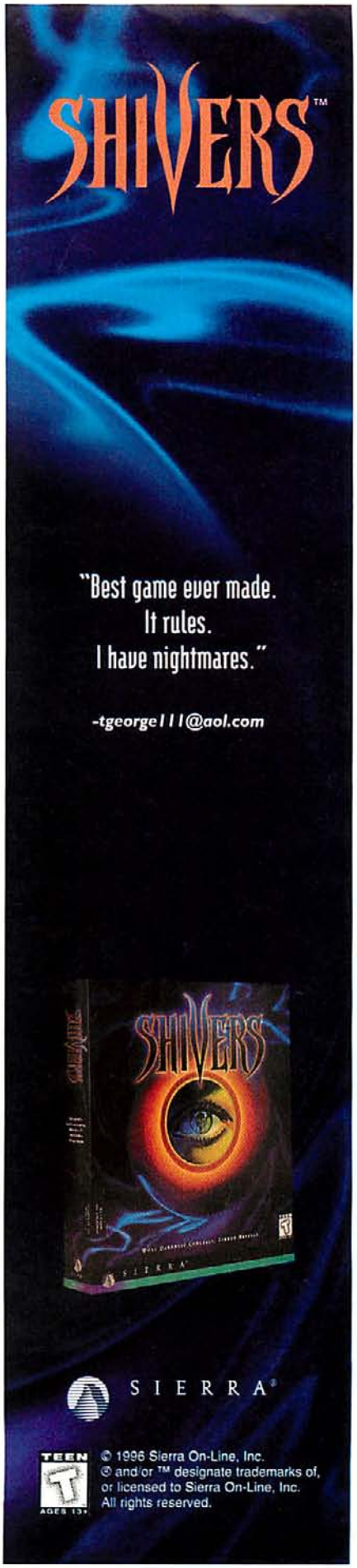
But it all worked out in the end, sweetie. Look at what they gave you as a reward.

I suppose.

Not every man has his own universe.

True. But at what cost? So many lives lost, so many ruined...

Don't think about it, Korda. Just rest and relax now, sweetie. You've earned it.



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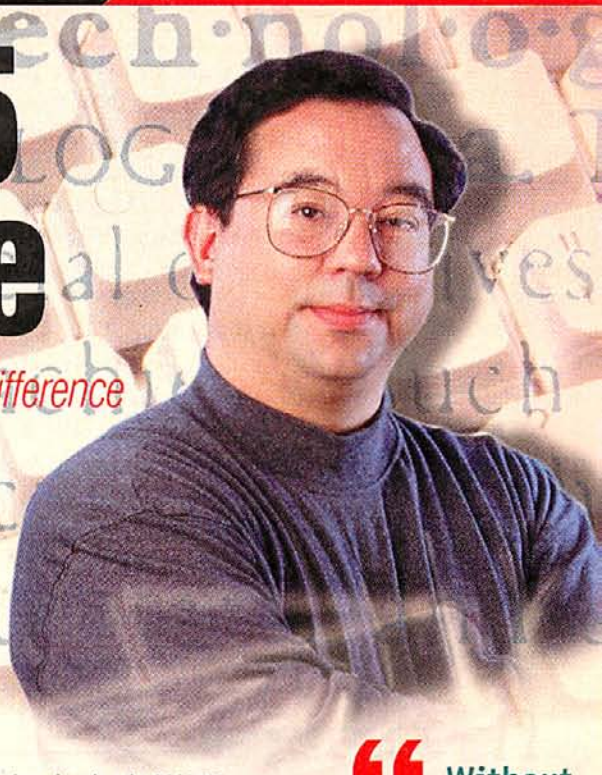
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Windows 95 Performance

Using The Right Video Card Drivers Makes A Big Difference



If you read one of my tech tips from several months ago (you *do* read them, don't you?), I mentioned that when you install Windows 95, it doesn't always install an optimized 32-bit driver for your graphics card. Depending on the chip used by your graphics adapter, a generic, 16-bit video driver may be installed which won't take advantage of Win 95's graphics enhancements.

The latest 32-bit graphics accelerator drivers can make all the difference for overall Windows 95 performance. Since these drivers will probably also be DirectDraw-aware, they can make a world of difference for Windows 95-native games.

I popped the hood on my PC and replaced my existing graphics adapter with the Diamond Stealth 64 3200 board, based on S3's 968 chip. To get a better idea how graphics performance will affect the average game system, I also reset my motherboard so that the 166 MHz Pentium chip would run at 100 MHz. When I powered up, Windows 95 detected that I had a new graphics card and loaded a generic S3 968 driver.

Normally, I run Windows 95 at a resolution of 1024x768 with 256 colors (I prefer speed over color depth unless I'm doing serious graphics work.) When I reset the graphics driver to my preferred resolution, the first thing I noticed is that my eyes hurt. The visible flicker on the screen was intense. As it turns out, the generic driver doesn't support the standard Windows 95 monitor tables, so even though I'd told the system I had a Sony 17SE, it acted as if I had a cheap 14" monitor.

Trying *not* to look at my screen, I inserted the Windows 95 upgrade CD and loaded the 32-bit driver. After a reboot, the refresh rate returned to its normal high rate and my eyes thanked me profusely.

Next, I installed two Windows 95 games that use DirectDraw: MECHWARRIOR 2 for Windows 95 and WARHAMMER: SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT. MECHWARRIOR 2 runs at a maximum resolution of 640x480 (unlike the DOS version, which can run at 1024x768). In a busy battle, the frame rate went south dramatically. The DOS version of

> **"Without the right set of drivers, you can have performance problems even on a 166-MHz Pentium."**

LAB NOTES

There are a few quirks in setting up QUAKE for a LAN-based, multiplayer death match, but Fragville is only a few steps away: First, QUAKE, like most IPX-based games, tends to fuss about the Ethernet frame type you're using. Without getting into too much netminutae, you can easily tweak your frame type in a file called NET.CFG which normally lives in the subdirectory with your other network driver files.

In the NET.CFG file, look under the Link Driver section, and there should be a line that says "Frame" followed by something like Ethernet 802.2 or Ethernet 802.3. You can actually load multiple frame types, but verify that all opponents are loading the same frame type *first*. Both the 802.2 and 802.3 frame types work fine for gaming, just make sure the frame type load order is the same as your fellow fraggers.

After everyone's logged on to a common file server, the player with the fastest machine will act as a "listen server." To launch that, type "quake -listen" in the QUAKE sub-directory, and once inside QUAKE, start a level (i.e. "map test2"). You'll see a message saying "server spawned." At this point, up to seven other players can launch QUAKE and type "connect" at their QUAKE prompt, and each will enter the level and join in the carnage.



MECHWARRIOR 2 could handle almost any combat at 640x480. WARHAMMER was even worse, particularly in a 3D battle scene with more than a couple of units. Clearly, Microsoft and the game companies must be lying about Windows 95 game performance. Well, not exactly.

"I'M SORRY, DAVE..."

Let's digress for a moment, and talk about the inner workings of DirectDraw. One of the key internal features of DirectDraw is its *Hardware Abstraction Layer*, or HAL for short (you know, like the demented computer from *2001*.) When a DirectDraw-aware game accesses the graphics card, it must go through the HAL. The program calls the DirectDraw Application Programming Interface (API), which in turn queries the DirectDraw HAL, which then reports back to the program what features the graphics card has, like hardware acceleration, the kind of memory it has, the chipset features, whether it has a hardware cursor, and so on. DirectDraw's HAL is a key technology to making hardware-independent game titles, since a DirectDraw-aware game calls DirectDraw rather than going straight "to the metal."

The problem here is that the HAL *must be supplied by the graphics card vendor*. In other words, only the most recent graphics driver for a particular card may have DirectDraw support. Contact your vendor to be sure. If you're running an older Windows 95 graphics driver, it may know nothing about DirectDraw.

Currently, DirectDraw drivers ship with titles that use DirectDraw, and are installed along with the title itself. If the title's DirectDraw driver goes to query the DirectDraw HAL and doesn't find one, you have a less than optimal situation. All is not lost though, since DirectDraw also has a *HAL emulator*. The emulator "fools" the DirectDraw driver into thinking that there's a DirectDraw HAL, and passes most of DirectDraw's calls to your rig's CPU. But there's a pretty nasty performance hit in going this route.

TO HAL AND BACK

The adverse affect of the HAL emulator cannot be overstressed. The HAL emulator knows *nothing* of the underlying graphics hardware, so DirectDraw (and hence, the game), can't make use of all those nifty features, such as graphics acceleration, on the card. Instead it uses standard Windows graphics routines (known as the Graphics Device Interface, or GDI) to handle all the screen graphics. GDI can, and does, make use of some accelerator features, but the GDI is a very high level abstraction. Trying to use the GDI for game graphics is like trying to get a Chevy Nova to "emulate" a Dodge Viper. You can do it, sort of, but don't expect to go 160 MPH.

Next, I loaded the latest and greatest graphics drivers from Diamond, which are DirectDraw-aware. Out of curiosity, I ran Ziff-Davis's Winbench 96 Graphics Winmark before and after installing the drivers. I saw almost no performance gain for standard Windows graphics.

However, WARHAMMER ran *much* better than before. Next, I started up MECHWARRIOR 2... and got a black screen. A quick perusal of the readme file for Diamond's new drivers uncovered the fact that they do *not* work with MECHWARRIOR 2 for Windows 95. This is a bug, not a feature. Diamond is trying to fix the problem, and may have it fixed by the time you read this. Check their BBS or web site for an updated driver.

STAYING UP TO SPEED

Next, I popped in a Matrox Millenium card, another fairly common graphics card (it ships with certain systems from Gateway, Micron, HP, IBM and NEC.) The version 1.0 Windows 95 drivers also exhibited relatively poor performance with the two test games. Loading up the rev 2.2 drivers made a world of difference in both WARHAMMER and MECHWARRIOR 2 for Windows 95. In fact, MECHWARRIOR 2 ran better than the DOS version, which was gratifying.

The moral of the story is simple. If you're planning on running Windows 95 games, particularly games that use DirectDraw, then make sure you have the most current drivers for your graphics hardware, and be sure they are DirectDraw enabled. Without the right set of drivers, it almost won't matter if you have a 166-MHz Pentium, you'll still have performance problems. However, once you install DirectDraw-aware drivers, you will be amazed at the difference in performance. If you have access to the World Wide Web (and you should!), you'll usually find that the manufacturer of your graphics card has the latest versions of the driver for your card on its web site.

CG TIPS!

These days, hard disks are getting bigger and bigger. However, even Windows 95 still uses the old DOS file system, based on the increasingly creaky File Allocation Table (FAT), which is basically a table which contains information about where the files and file fragments live on the hard disk. The maximum number of FAT entries is 65,535. The biggest cluster size (also called an allocation unit) is 32,768 bytes (or 32 kilobytes.) If you do the math, you'll see that the biggest single DOS partition you can have is 65,536 clusters of 32,768 bytes each, or a little over 2.1 gigabytes.

Consider this: if you get a 1.2 gigabyte disk drive, and create one big partition, each cluster will be 32 kilobytes. This means that a one byte file will take up 32 KB of disk space. However, if you partition the drive into two volumes, say a 1 GB volume and a 200 MB volume, then the cluster size shrinks to 16 KB. Since there are lots of small files in computer games, it's much more space efficient to have smaller partitions. The tradeoff is having more drive letters. The choice is up to you.

Some of you may realize that compression schemes, such as Stacker or Microsoft's DriveSpace, are very space efficient, since they look like one big file to the computer. However, because of the unique nature of computer game graphics, compressed volumes may actually be less efficient than uncompressed drives. Most game graphics are already compressed, and so the file will seemingly take up twice as much room on the compressed drive, which reports an amount of space based on a theoretical compression ratio.

For those of you who are curious: since I have six gigabytes of disk space (one 2 GB drive and one 4 GB drive), I just bit the bullet and stopped worrying about cluster size. I have three 2 gigabyte partitions.

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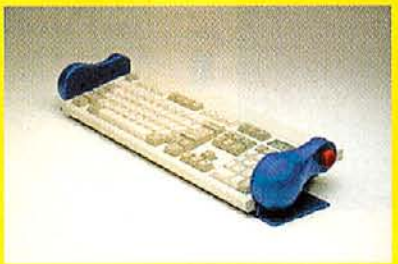
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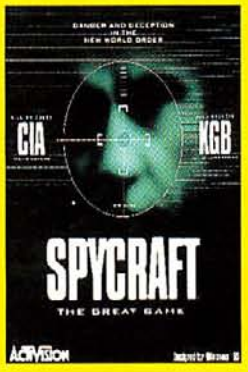
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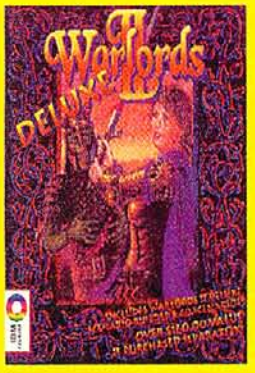
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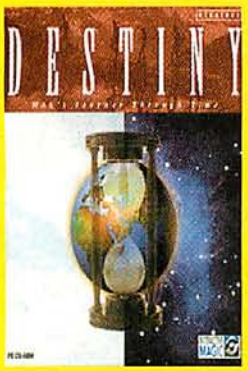
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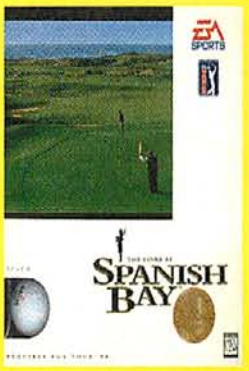
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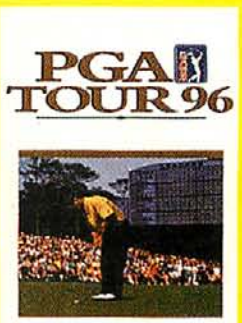
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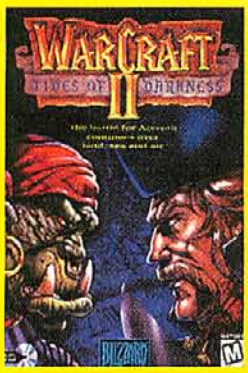
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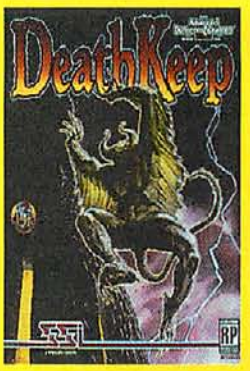
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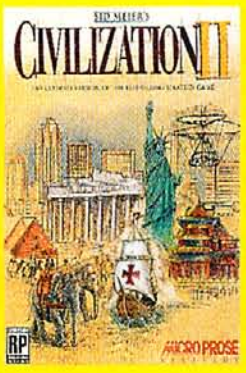
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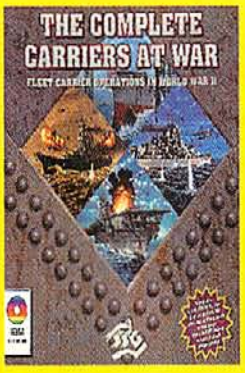
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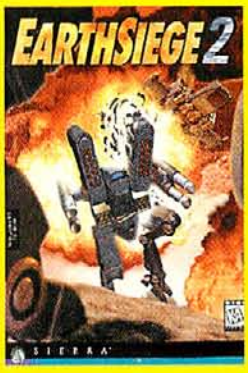
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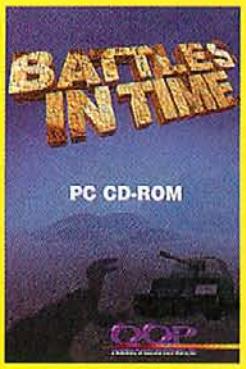
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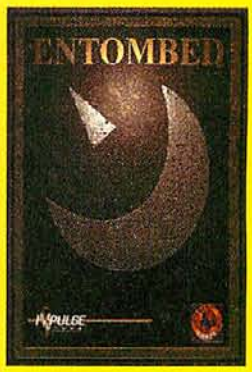
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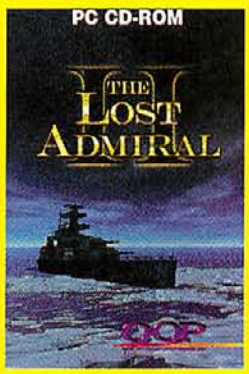
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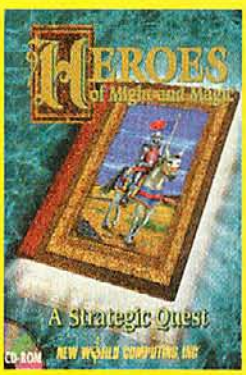
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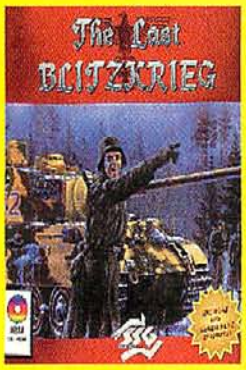
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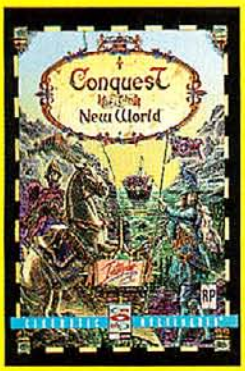


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Circle Reader Service #68

Online Design Diary

IF {Compromise Design} Now THEN > {Compromise Programming} Later = Limits {Unnecessary}

by Alan Lenton

Tyson's Corner, VA. In a hotel room near AOL headquarters, I've just pried Nick, my chief programmer, off the laptop. He claims he was "testing" FREECELL, a bundled freebie on Windows 95. It's been a hectic month. The first part was devoted to getting everything ready for a game milestone. When people give money for a product, they expect to see evidence of activity at regular intervals! We cleaned up the design document, wrote the storyboards and designed the front end. It was quite chaotic, but everything got there on time.

In the process a number of design issues were resolved–including that of game time. We decided to allocate a set amount of game time for each expedition. The game will keep track of simultaneous sub-expeditions, and figure out how much they overlapped. Players will need to organize themselves in such a way that a minimum of time is spent tracking things down. In this way, parties of players won't be able to start out on a quest and then, simply vanish. We also decided to put a real-time limit on the completion of each quest.

At present, I'm not precisely sure how we are going to implement this time feature. I know some designers start to take account of programming limitations at this stage, but I disagree with that approach. Anything can be programmed, the question is whether it will run fast enough and fit into the target machine's memory limitation. When we actually program this bit of code, we will make any necessary compromises and I'll tell you the outcome. I know the way programmers' minds work. If I make compromises now, I will have to make more compromises at programming time!

While I cleaned up the design, we continued work on the storyboards. I'm not going to tell you much about them, because that would give away the answers. However, I can tell you that everyone's favorite is the search for the mummified remains of Cleopatra's Asp!

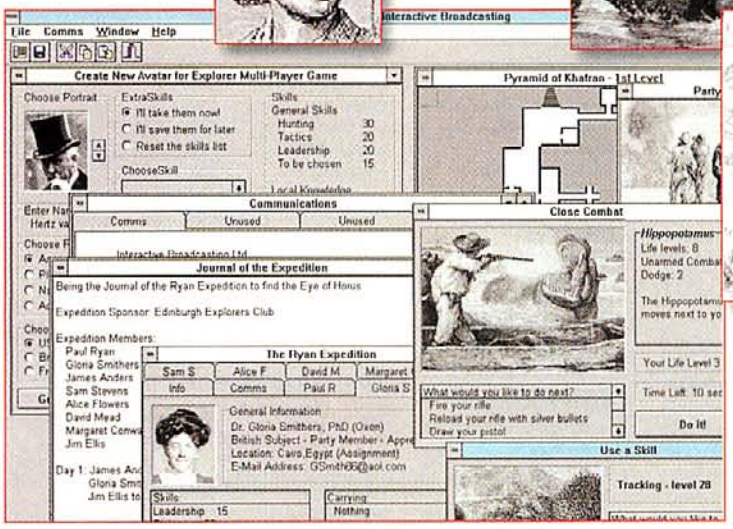
One thing that became obvious was that we needed a proper combat system. We had intended to have just an abstract combat system, but eventually settled for a turn based system with a maximum time for giving orders. We would rather have a real-time combat system, but with network delays looming large we opted for a turn-based system.

More next month!





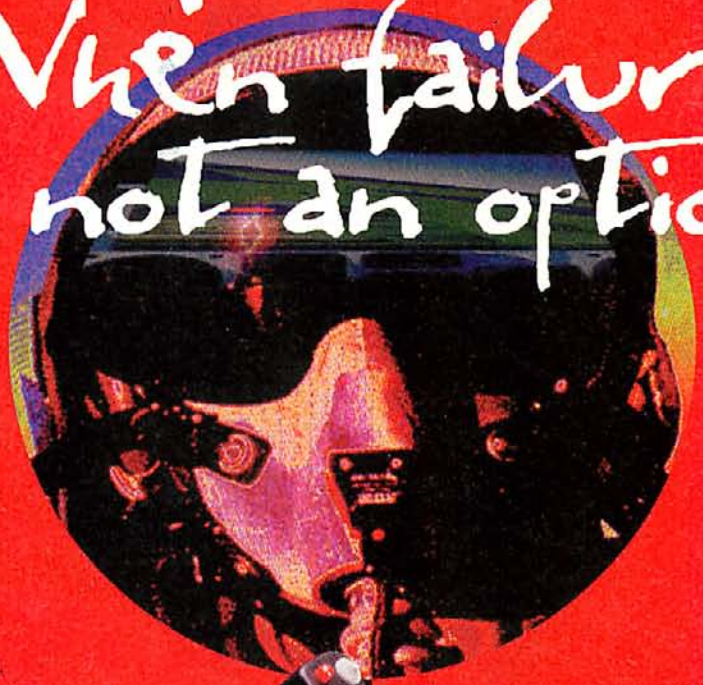




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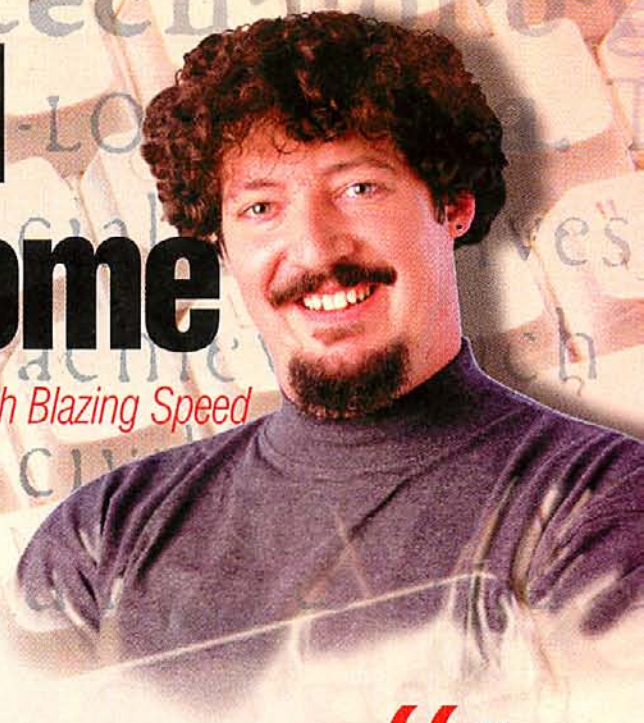
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Circle Reader Service #230

Build It, And They Will Come

Apogee's 3D Build Engine Blends Eye Candy With Blazing Speed



If there's ever been a holy grail in PC games, it was defined the moment DOOM burst onto the scene. Sure, we had first-person 3-D before, but DOOM defined the visceral experience. For the last few years, everybody, including id themselves, have tried to take a chunk out of that market, often falling far short of the mark.

Apogee's 3D Realms isn't just another wannabe in the 3-D market. They started the folks at id on their way with a $3,000 check and had to deal with the pain as id broke free and set DOOM loose on the world, forcing Apogee into a two-year sprint to catch up.

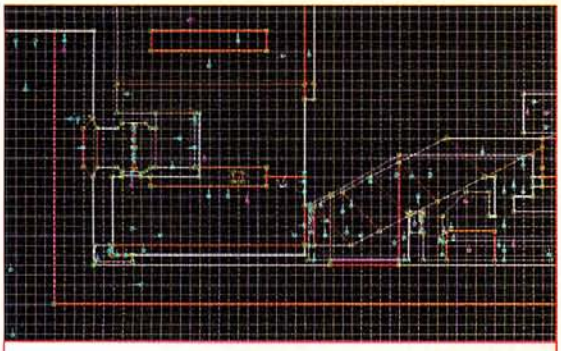
With DUKE NUKEM 3D, no one can argue that they haven't made up the distance, and they are, for the moment at least, in the lead.

START YOUR ENGINES

A 3-D shooter like DOOM or DUKE is comprised of equal parts design and technology. The design can be distilled into the nuances and challenges of the individual levels. The technology is the 3-D engine which makes the game go. In the most simple of explanations, an "engine" is a bunch of program code that handles the core operations of a game. DUKE NUKEM uses the Build Engine, which consists of the code that turns raw data into visual 3-D environments, draws them on the screen and handles all of the little details like drawing and animating slavering monsters and streaking missiles. Strictly speaking, things like artificial intelligence aren't part of the Build Engine.

Apogee's Build Engine, written by Ken Silverman, a young self-taught programming *wunderkind* (see sidebar), is unique for two primary reasons. First, it is a very fast, very flexible tool to draw complex 3-D environments on the PC. It can create things that DOOM (and its progeny) can't even dream of, such as looking up and down, slopes, swimming, multiple level-platforms, smoothly curved walls, jumping down holes into different regions, etc.

The other advantage of the Build Engine lies in Silverman's unique Build Editor software, which allows designers at Apogee to craft incredibly detailed levels in virtual space. In a coup sure to keep BBSes stocked for months, Apogee is releasing that very same editor on the commercial CD-ROM of DUKE NUKEM 3D.



SECTOR SOUFLEE The Build Engine's 2-D editor is used to lay out sectors and place sprites. This is the adult bookstore from the shareware levels of DUKE NUKEM 3D. The small circle and line objects are sprites.

TECHNOLOGICAL PROWESS

The Build Engine is a speed demon. Apogee, while designing the DUKE levels, would not accept any less than 20 frames per second on a 486-66, and even with that restriction, the visual content of the levels is far richer than that found in any of the other 3-D games out there. Not that Apogee is very happy about designing for 486s, however.

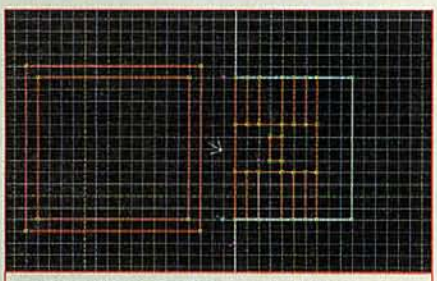
"A 486-66 is an ancient piece of junk," laments Alan Blum, one of the DUKE 3D level designers. "We wish they'd all get Pentiums."

Games like DOOM and HERETIC rely on a binary search partition (BSP) system to precalculate the views you can see from nearly every point and angle within the level. This large data tree is then used by the drawing routines to quickly paint a frame on the screen. Precalculating leads to a significant restriction, however: the

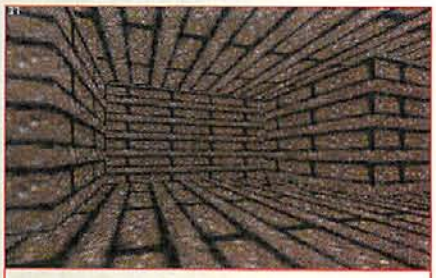
> "The Build Engine lets you craft incredibly detailed levels in virtual space."

PAUL SCHUYTEMA

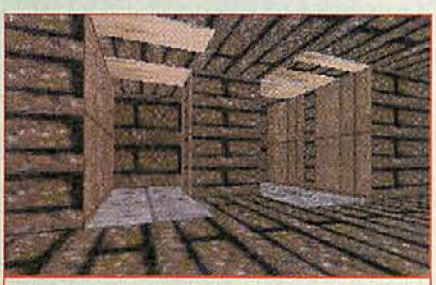
Level Construction 101



FROM SIMPLE SECTORS... I decided to try my hand at level design and began crafting the entrance to the student union of the college where I teach. The first step was to lay out the sectors for the steps.



LOOKIN' LIKE A CAVE Initially, it isn't much to look at, more like a mossy cave than anything remotely collegiate.



FUN WITH TEXTURES The first step was to begin applying textures. The vertical banding occurs because each stair sector also creates its own wall



EXTRUDE AND EXPAND Each step has to be "grown" individually, by placing the mouse cursor on the top of the stair and tapping the PgUp key.



COLLEGIATE CORNER At last, after several hours of work, the entrance to the student union is finished. Notice the recessed lighting and the sloped face of the ATM machine, all done by manually manipulating the sectors. The carpet is created with two floor sectors with different textures applied to each.

"lay of the land" cannot change as the game is being played. Buildings can't topple, walls can't blow open and doors can't rotate or swing open. Essentially, the bird's eye view of a level can't change at all, since those boundaries are all precalculated.

WOLFENSTEIN 3D, id's earlier game, which was bankrolled by Apogee, doesn't have those restrictions, because it used a technique known as ray casting. This approach essentially traces imaginary rays of light to see what they bounce off of, such as walls and doors. This worked well in the rather simple geometry of WOLFENSTEIN's castles, but when the environment becomes complex, the time it takes to calculate the light rays increases logarithmically.

The Build Engine uses a technique similar to that used in calculating sector intersections when a DOOM BSP is built, but does it on the fly. By optimizing the code which calculates what can or can't be seen, and coupling that with high-speed assembly language routines which actually draw that data into the video buffers, the Build Engine can successfully juggle complexity and speed, without the "sectors can't change" rule imposed by DOOM'S BSP reliance.

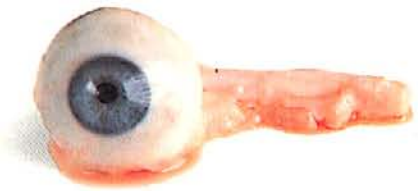
ANY SECTOR IN A STORM

The chief atom for the Build Engine is the sector. A sector is most easily defined as a closed polygon. A rectangle for a room is a quick and dirty example. Yet once you dive into the Build Editor, you quickly discover that the sector-equals-room metaphor breaks down almost immediately. A sector is more like a "region of interest" than a room, such as a pool of light on the floor, an ATM machine or a desk.

A level in DUKE NUKEM is simply a large combination of sectors, each with unique properties, along with myriad placed items (such as guns, monsters and eye-candy).

Sectors may either define the walls of a room, or they may define something else, like a lighting effect or solid object. If you consider the adult bookstore in the shareware version of the game, the magazine

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shelves are sectors that look like objects, while the strange and severe shadows near the bathroom, are lighting effect sectors. Both types of sectors are exactly the same, they've just had different properties applied to them in the editor.

In a way, a level map is like a database of individuals. The sectors have unique positions in the level, and each side of a sector, as well as its floor and ceiling, point to a record of unique information, such as the shade of the wall, the texture map which is applied, the slope, the height, as well as any action tags, such as information that tells the engine that this sector is a door which will open under certain conditions, and so on.

When the Build Engine revs up to begin a DUKE NUKEM gaming session, it initially combs through the level data to remove any "invisible" sprites and then places the sector data in memory. As you play the game, the graphics routines use the sector information, both the boundaries of the sectors and the attached information, to determine which sectors you can see and how to draw them.

INTO THE EDITOR

Creating levels using Silverman's Build Editor is at once a simple and a highly involved art. To simply create a "generic" room, you can just place the points for a rectangle in the 2-D, CAD-like portion of the program.

A simple key tap brings you into the 3-D portion of the editor, which is just like the game itself, except that you may now effect changes on the environment you see. Initially, the room is low-ceilinged and all surfaces are covered with the generic "dirty bricks" texture. A few keystrokes is all it takes to raise the ceiling, change the wall texture, add a parquet floor and dim the lighting to a more subdued tone.

If you jump back into the 2-D editor and draw another rectangular sector within your room, it will turn red, showing that it isn't a "walled" sector, but an interior sector. Back into the 3-D mode, you won't see any changes, but you can modify that sector on its own.

A few keystrokes, and you can recess the rectangle into the ceiling, apply a fluorescent light texture to it, and turn the brightness up to maximum. Another few keystrokes and you can illuminate the floor rectangle to create the illusion that light from above is shining on the floor. You can even raise the sector out of the floor and apply a desk texture to the top of it.

When designing a level, you need to think ahead, since sectors are not the equivalent of rooms. Generally, a level starts out a one or just a few huge sectors, with everything else added on after that. To create stairs, for example, you must create a sector for each step and then "extrude" them out of the floor.

When you apply a texture to a surface, a 64x64 bitmap texture tile is applied to the entire face of the surface. Often, your wall or floor won't mesh perfectly with the tiles, so the editor allows you to slide the tiles around on the surface, as well as to stretch or expand the image, to get just the right fit.

Once you have your room the way you want it, you can add details, like a potted plant or a pig cop, simply by returning to the 2-D view and placing a sprite. Back in the 3-D editor, you can then change your

Buildin' The Build

"The guy's just brilliant—he's a programmer from Venus," exclaimed Apogee's Scott Miller about their Rhode Island-based savant, Ken Silverman. Silverman created the Build Engine, the workhorse 3-D environment which first debuted in TEK-WAR, but is being pushed to its limits by Apogee's DUKE NUKEM 3D, as well as the upcoming SHADOW WARRIOR and BLOOD.



Ken Silverman is the 19-year-old wunderkind programmer of the Build Engine.

Silverman first approached Apogee with his game, KEN'S LABYRINTH, several years ago. Apogee immediately recognized Silverman's programming prowess, but the game was still too rough for them, so Silverman's title was picked up by Epic Megagames. A few months later, when Silverman was only seventeen years old, he began work on the Build Engine.

"I wanted to make a cool thing that impressed people," confessed Silverman. DOOM wasn't out yet, but it was on its way, and Silverman marveled at the pre-release screen shots. He wanted to make a 3-D engine that would look like the screen shots.

In August of 1993, Silverman signed with Apogee to finish and polish the Build Engine.

"Originally, I wanted to make the whole game myself," said Silverman. Apogee convinced Silverman that his skills were in engine design.

Silverman joined Apogee only a month before he started college at Brown University, deciding to work from home and commute to Texas only when necessary. It was written into his contract that school-work came first, but Silverman soon found himself programming away his hours and letting his classes slide. With some nudging from his father, who is also his business manager, Silverman took a leave of absence to concentrate full time on finishing the Build Engine.

Silverman, a self-taught programmer, found little use for any of the other information out there. "If I read a book about [3-D programming] I found that I either knew it all or it was totally useless to me... They really don't teach 3-D programming in school, and if they do, they teach you a really slow way to do it."

Silverman crafted the Build Engine in C with quite a few assembly language routines. The assembly routines are used for the time-intensive tasks such as vertical and horizontal line texturing, handling slopes and working with translucent textures.

Since Build Engine doesn't use binary search partitions or ray casting, most of its blazing speed comes from the unique drawing routines developed by Silverman.

"My vertical drawing routines are 32-bit, aligned right. I discovered that it takes about the same time to write four bytes (32 bits) of drawing data as it does to write a single byte," said Silverman. That discovery allows his assembly routines to do more in a single pass than the other 3-D engines.

When asked about working with the Apogee team, Silverman admitted: "It's hard when you're working with other programmers, because they always screw things up." Yet Silverman is very happy with DUKE NUKEM 3D.

After Silverman finishes work on Duke and its progeny, he's not quite sure what his next move will be. "Maybe I'll work on sequels to the games, go back to college or start my own business. But I don't know about that, since I'm not much of a businessman."

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EXPLODING MATCHES All of the thin orange sticks are compressed C-9 canisters, just waiting for the trigger to ignite into an impressive fireball.

sprite to be anything you want. If you choose the pig cop, then the editor knows enough to create the code that tells the creature how to behave within the game. With a plant or trash can, the object just sits there, looking pretty.

Creating a level that looks right takes a great deal of time, and it forces you to think like the Build Engine, not like a commonsensical human being.

Beyond the visual, though, the Build Editor is the tool used to create all of the event linkages in your level. Sprites and walls all have an attribute called a "low-tag" which is a numerical value that allows an object, such as a sprite for a switch, to be associated with an action, such as opening a door or raising a platform.

In addition, several "special purpose" sprites, which are culled out in the pre-game read of the level, can be placed anywhere on the level. These sprites can allow the designer to create realistic actions such as triggering a horde of enemies to charge the player who steps through one of these invisible objects.

MANY MONTHS OF DUKE

Even with the Build Engine and the powerful editor in hand, Apogee has spent close to 20 months creating the levels for DUKE NUKEM 3D. A level's design often evolved from one of the Apogee crew discovering some cool sector effect, such as the ability to create subway trains, for example.

While it may take weeks to craft a particular level map, it takes even more time to work through that level and tweak it for gameplay (both single and multiplayer) and frame rate.

"Since the Build Editor is so easy to use," said Blum, "you can instantly [create] something that's dog-slow."

Using the editor, which can display the current frame rate, designers Allan Blum and Richard Gray can cull particular regions, simplifying and modifying to make sure that the game performs as promised.

As mentioned above, creating stairs requires you to create and raise a sector for each step. When the Build Engine is calculating a view that contains steps, it must deal with each and every sector of



the steps each time it calculates a frame. Because of that, nothing bogs down frame rate like steps. Halfway through the project, the team was frustrated with this limitation and turned to Silverman for a solution. He modified the engine to allow it to handle slopes, so that a single sector could be used instead of many. While steps are crucial in some levels, slopes have been used in other places to keep the frame rate manageable.

Many of the spectacular effects in DUKE 3D came about as the designers forced the Build Engine to its limits. In level two of the shareware version, when the building blows up, allowing you access to the yellow key, Blum discovered that if you placed a canister of C-9 explosive on the ground, and then shrink it to its thinnest proportions, it is visible in the editor while invisible in the game. This allowed him the opportunity to "pre-chorcograph" a massive explosion by placing dozens of these emaciated canisters in front of the building.

Blum and Gray have also logged many hours improving certain levels of the game to enhance the multiplayer experience. Generally, the smaller, more compact levels favor multiplay, while the sprawling levels are ideal for solo outings.

"We may give net players a great place to hide and snipe from," admitted Blum, "but there's always a way to get there. Most of the time, you can also hear them creeping around. That's because I don't like waiters... I like to kill waiters."

GIVE 'EM WHAT THEY WANT

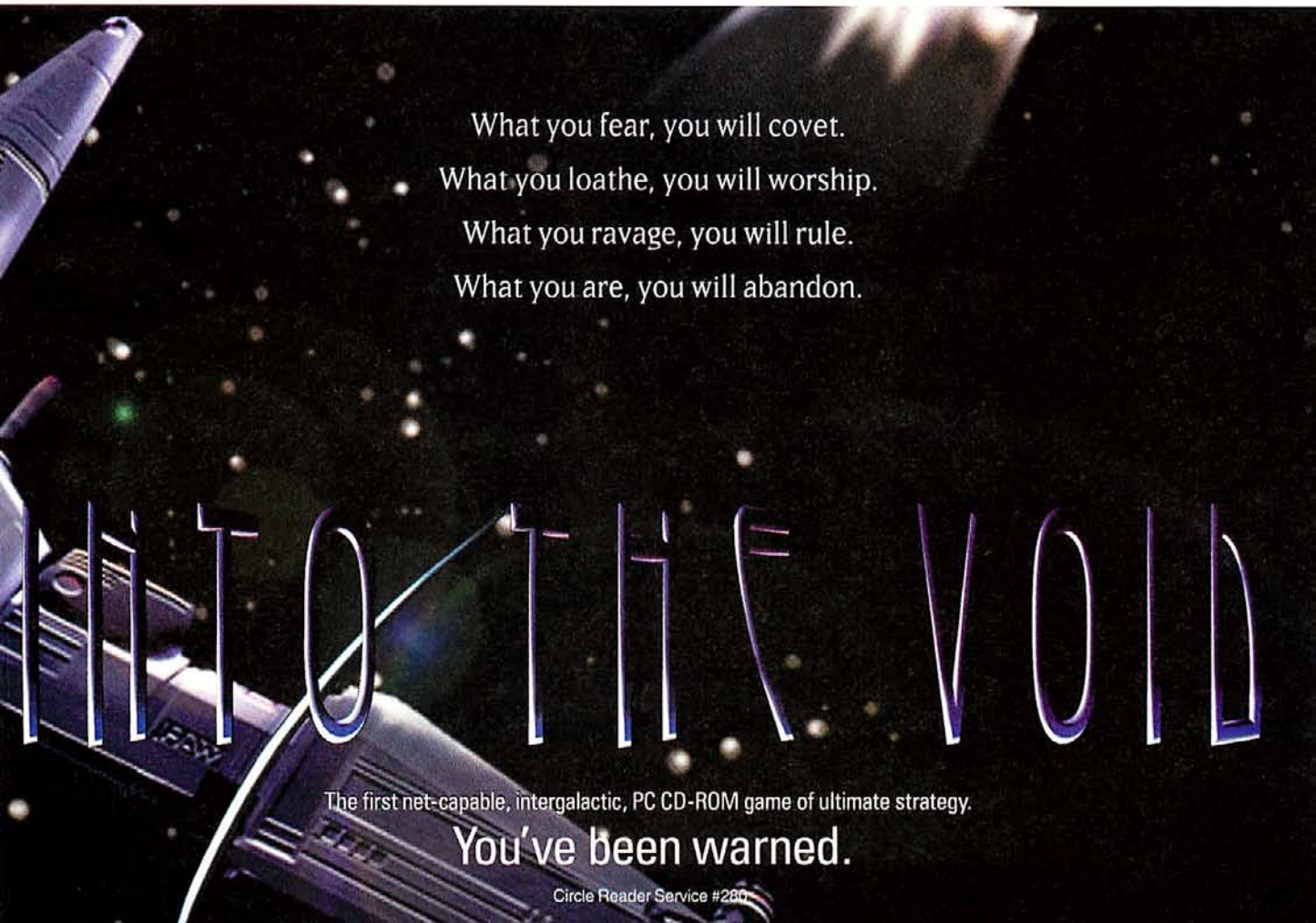
"Some people think that we're nuts, just giving our tools away," said George Broussard, president of 3D Realms. "The way we look at it is that we spent two years developing this thing, and we're not going to use it any more. We're moving on to newer technology. All that's happening here is that people are going to have fun and enjoy a product for a change."



TRIGGER ME THIS These odd letter icons are trigger sprites, invisible to the player, but they are the key to the game's interactivity.

"With the Build Editor, you can basically experiment to your heart's delight, and you can't break anything... you've seen all those DOOM editors out there — this just kicks their ass."

"I used to play [DOOM] all the time," confessed Blum, "but, ugh, I can't take it anymore — I can't ever go back to DOOM."



Citizens of Planet Earth:

You Are the Enemy.

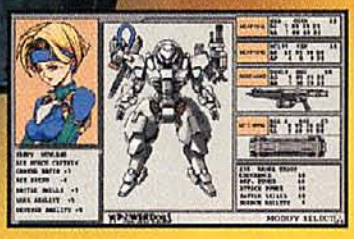
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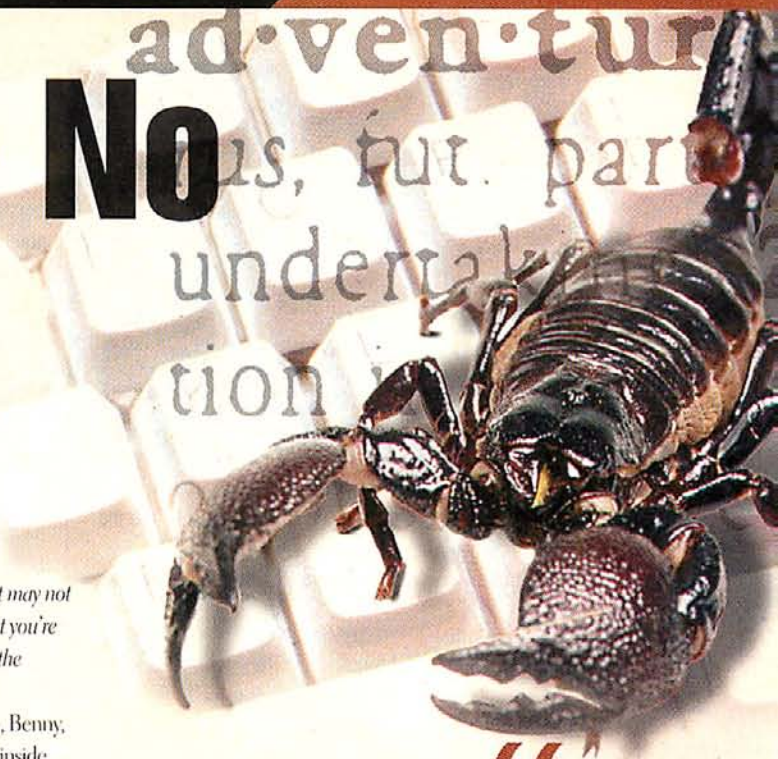
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Minimum Requirements: O/S - DOS 5.0, Ram - 4MB, Video - VGA, CD-ROM - 2x, Hard Disk - 5MB, Sound - Sound Blaster & MIDI, Input - Mouse

You Have No Clue?

Don't Scream, Here Are Hints For I Have No Mouth



Hey, is it spring already? Seems like just the other day we were getting into autumn, and now the winter's already over! Where does the time go? I guess you can really lose track of it when you're with a good computer. You can also lose track of it when you're *in* a computer, and *not* a good one, at that.

I Have No Mouth But I Must Scream is based on Harlan Ellison's short story of the same name, but you don't have to have read it to play the game. It wouldn't help you, anyway, since while the game deals with the same characters and same evil computer, the action here is quite different from the story. (*It may not be of much help in the game, but you're missing a treat if you don't read the story.–Ed.*)

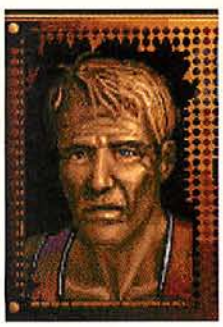
Five people–Gorrister, Ellen, Benny, Nimdok, and Ted–are captives inside AM, a sentient computer that has wiped all life off the earth. AM hates everyone, and has kept these "lucky" folks alive to torture them endlessly, both physically and mentally. Not exactly a cheery situation.

Now AM is playing a new game with them, and that's what this one is about. Each character goes through a custom scenario created by AM, designed to exploit that person's weakness. Naturally, the computer hopes they will foul up. Your job is to see that they don't. You do this by making the right choices, and keeping an eye on the Spiritual Barometer (SB), which is the background color of the character's portrait. It starts as black, turning brighter green as you perform the right actions.

Perfect play will bring the SB up to white, although that isn't absolutely necessary to "win" the scenario. However, it is vital that the color be at least very bright green for each character to ensure success in the endgame. The order of play doesn't matter; each scenario is self-contained, so you can start with any of the five and continue in whatever sequence you like.

> "Amazingly, the game comes to a happy ending, of sorts."

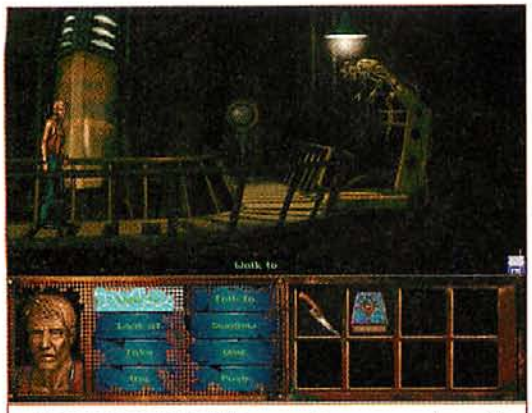
GORRISTER



The first task here is to land the airship safely. Make a tour of the vessel, being sure to pick up all possible items (look especially carefully around the kitchen). One door is locked, and can't be opened until later on. Once you've got everything in your hot little hands (if they're a bit messy, wipe them off), it's time to foul up the works a bit. As long as the engine is running, safe landing isn't possible, so you'll want to do something about that. Then

CRYSTAL BALL

- Might & Magic VI brings a whole new look to the storied role-playing series, with a fully object-oriented emphasis on a "realistic" and rich fantasy world. Expect this one by late summer/early fall.
- The Dreamer's Guild is doing an on-line pirate game, Skulls, Bones & Buccanners. From what we've seen so far, this game has a more sophisticated tactical combat system than Sid Meier's venerable Pirates!, and the crew management forms a big part of gameplay as well.
- Fairy Tale Adventure, the old Amiga classic, is finally being updated for PC by Trimark.
- If you've ever wondered why the TV show *Joe's Apartment* (of MTV fame) hasn't been made into a game yet, worry no longer. Viacom, flushed with the success of their Beavis & Butt-Head game, has acquired the license, so that you, as Joe, can fight off those ferocious cockroaches yourself.



ENGINE LUBRICATION Strange as it seems, you do need the milky white fluid. Take the key, then push the lever, use the fork on the engine and leave.

you can turn your attention to the airbags (and don't forget about the stitching at the far end; it's important). Before long, Corrister should be arriving at the roadside honky-tonk.

Nothing worthwhile is outside, so let's go in. Not a lot to see here, either, though you should scan those shelves carefully. And how about that jukebox? It has some interesting tunes, although one is not recommended listening. Check out the men's room and by that time, Harry should be at the bar.

He has a lot of information to relate (keep in mind talking is thirsty work), and a helpful suggestion, too. You should follow up on it, and maybe come across an important item you didn't see before (no, not in the stall).

Another interesting character, the Jackal, is waiting out back. You do have to give him what he wants. That will get you in to see Edna and Glynis, although you may want to hop back to the airship first for another look at the dining room.

There's not much you can do for Glynis right now. As for Edna, I wouldn't trust her too far, but taking her down is a good thing. It's best not to be violent here, no matter what. And you'll finally get the key to the locked door on the zeppelin, too. Before leaving the meat locker, you'll want to take a really close look at the beef carcass, as well.

After you've read Edna's diary, Corrister should be in pretty good shape. Now he can do something for Glynis, and after that, it's time to take off. If you remember what powered the ship before, you should have an idea of what (who?) to use to start things up. And you can end things with a real bang by going out the rip for a final chat with the Jackal before leaving.



BUT I HATE YELLOW As Ellen, reason with the sarcophagus, then wrap yourself in that disgusting yellow cloth to gain entrance to the secret passage.

ELLEN



Ellen gets to play around in an Egyptian-motif pyramid, tastefully decorated in mainly yellow, a color that gives her panic attacks. The monitors are important; be sure to see both scenes on them, and don't be afraid to do a little repair work. That will get you down below, where the fun begins.

First we have the Anubis room, where Ellen can't do much except talk to the statue for now. Beyond is a room with a couple of items, including some yellow cloth that she has trouble picking up.

Well, if at first you don't succeed...

Then there's the room with the gold statues. The middle one is obviously important, what with the gem in its chest. Ellen's reluctant to touch it, though; maybe she's seeing too much yellow (note: even though the CD is perfectly visible, it can't be taken at this time).

Now we have the computer terminal room. The terminal on the left is the important one, after it's been powered up.



MORE MUMMY MOUTHINGS After you finish with the computer, make sure to go back and check out the sarcophagus.

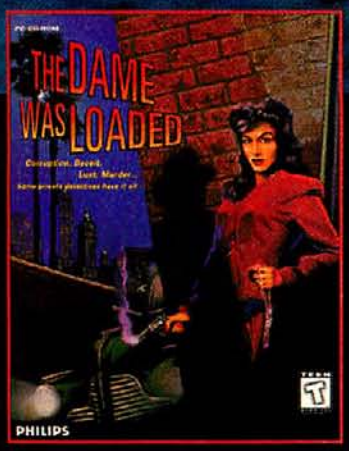
That should give you some ideas about Anubis. Following through on that means going back upstairs and grabbing the cup, which ought to be easy enough now, and I don't have to tell you what to do with it.

Once Anubis is more cooperative, Ellen can enter the sarcophagus to relive the event that caused her fear of yellow. All I'll say about this is: you can't run, you can't hide, and you better not give up.

After this little interlude, Ellen passes through a room she saw on the monitor, then the heavy yellow room she couldn't walk into before, which brings her back, eventually, to the terminal room, and the right-hand terminal, now usable. This part is pretty obvious, and before long, Ellen is chatting with a computer that isn't AM (how interesting; looks like AM doesn't know quite everything).

It mentions something she overlooked, which is likely back in the gold statue room. There's only one thing to do: go back, get it, and use it, dangerous though that may be. Then it's just a matter of leaving this delightful place, and Anubis has

"The trail was colder than an icebox in an igloo. I had a list of shady suspects longer than my bar bill at the Dew Drop Inn. But I was on to something. She was 5 feet 4 inches of trouble and I was just an inch away from being 6 feet under."



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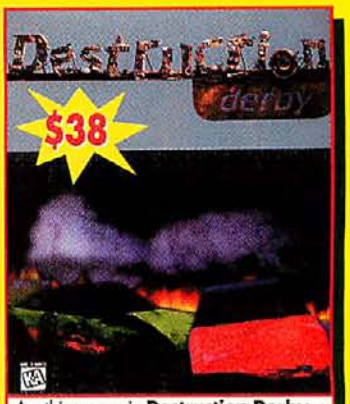
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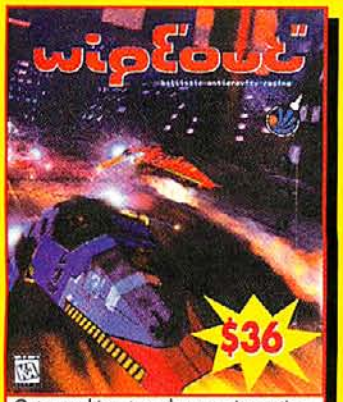
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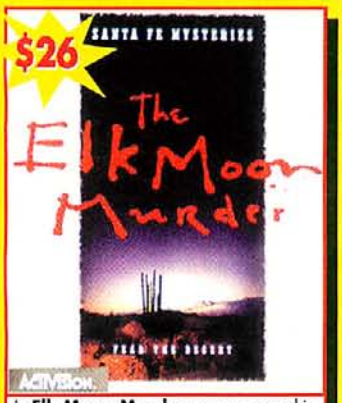
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some advice on that.

BENNY



Benny's been deformed by AM; he can't speak beyond a few mumbled sounds, walks crouched over, and doesn't have much use of his hands. Don't feel too sorry for him, however; there's a dirty secret in his past that he'll have to confront and overcome in this scenario.



CAVEMAN BENNY Surrounded by primitives, Benny must choose his words carefully to avoid misunderstandings–and a lost game.

He's been dropped in a sort of jungle/primitive native type of place. After a quick check of the area (that altar looks ominous, and so does the graveyard, for that matter), it's time to visit the inhabitants. Don't worry too much about the left-most cave; you'll be able to get in there when it matters.

The village elder doesn't have much to say, and it's really the mother and child who are important here. Benny will have to get on good terms with them before much happens; perhaps a little gift would do the trick. Then a close look at the video screen is in order.

It won't be long before we find out AM gets some jollies by demanding sacrifices from the natives. Good old AM. Benny's probably all tired out by now, but he can't sleep while he's hungry. Tried some of the fruit yet? Not too nice, is it? Maybe his new friends can help him.

Morning comes along, and mom isn't around the cave. Well, this is sacrifice day, after all. Maybe we should look in on this. Yep, everyone is gathered around the altar, and guess who pulls the black stone? Of course, the kid's mom. Unfortunately, there's nothing you can do here except watch what happens, and then tell the boy the bad news. A dismal day, and the sooner it ends, the better.

On the next morning, a look at the elder's video screen shows AM wants another sacrifice tomorrow. He (it?) is really becoming insatiable; I wonder if there's a way to stop this craziness. Ponder that while taking a walk to the cemetery. This is a good place to save, as the wrong conversation line will cost Benny some SB, and we don't want that.

Back at the village, it looks like the elder has gone out food gathering, and left a little something behind. How convenient! Help yourself, and chat with the boy afterwards. He won't hide unless he has a doll for company, so it's time to make the rounds to find the parts. The head and body are easy enough; for the connecting material, you'll want to visit the left-most cave.

Now you have to do something about the bag; it wouldn't be wise to be seen running around with it, although there is someone who might be interested in knowing what Benny's lugging around. Remember to bring a little gift for Brinkman, too.

So the final comes around, and surprise! The kid is gone. I wonder where he could be? Where else but the altar? Need I say what must be done here? Of course not, so just do it.

NIMDOK



Of the five, Nimdok probably has the worst sins in his past, but even he can make amends of sorts and find a little redemption. He starts out in a camp, and it won't take long to discover it's a Nazi experimental station. Yeah, Nimdok has some sins to account for, all right.

After a quick chat with the prisoner, look in on the hospital. I wouldn't recommend performing the operation, but you might want to do something about the other doctor. A hasty exit is then called for, and not the way you came in.

Nasty little Recovery Room, isn't it? You can't stay here right now, though, so find the other way out, into the oven room. There's a couple of things to pick up here, and something to read (happily, you don't have to do anything with those ovens). By then the excitement should be over, and you can exit to the yard and return to the hospital (security around here doesn't seem to be very good).

A new patient has replaced the boy, but skip him for the moment and talk to the kid (fortunately untouched) in the other room first. Back in the operating room, you may want to ease the patient's pain, and then go back outside to see what's what there. Another prisoner has turned up, caught on barbed wire and slowly dying. There's probably a couple of things you can do for him, before talking to the original inmate again.



BARBED-WIRE NIGHTMARE Nimdok is trapped in the concentration camp of his memories.

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man in the operating room. This is a good time to honor his original request. Step into the anteroom for a moment (something you need is there), then make tracks for the oven room exit, because the prisoners just broke out of confinement (gee, I wonder how that happened?). Either conversation line will get you through the gate and off to the bunker.

What Nimdok needs to do here is get the golem operational. First though, check out the vat very carefully, for an important item, and be sure Nimdok looks at it. After examining both the blueprints and the golem, what comes next will be obvious. You do have to be careful about what you say here, though; being honest is important.

On the way out, you'll run into Mengele. It's tempting to kill him (after pumping him for all he has to say), but there's a better way of dealing with him. Outside, Nimdok finds the prisoners have caught up to him. He only has to do one more thing with the golem, and the scenario will end.

TED



Ted's not so bad as some; his main problem is shallowness more than anything else. He starts in a room with several monitors; choosing the castle is the right move.

Once inside the castle, he soon comes across Ellen (his girlfriend, apparently; no relation to the other Ellen above), who isn't long for this world. She tells him about her magic mirror that protects her from her evil stepmother. Too bad the mirror is missing; now we'll have to find it.

As you check out the various rooms, be sure to read all the books you come across, and, as usual, pick up anything you can. In the kitchen is a maid who might be helpful; I don't advise accepting her offer of a cozy bed, though.

Okay, so she wasn't much help; at least Ted is keeping himself pure for the moment. You may be wondering about that little icon from the chapel; while nothing important hinges on this, it will raise Ted's SB a little if you figure out where to use it.

You may want to look in briefly on Ellen, where a Devil has appeared, waiting to grab her soul when she dies. This is also a good time to check those bookcases again, in case you missed something the first time around. Then you can go looking for the secret passage in the chapel (you knew there had to be one, right?).

This brings you to a confrontation with the witch. By all means, find out what she's up to, but don't accept any offers. If you read the right book, you'll know how to deal with her, and then you can summon up the demon yourself.



GOOD CAN'T EXIST WITHOUT EVIL It's hard to believe, but the chapel is the route to the devil Surgat, whom you need to win the game.

Surgat can open anything, and there's likely a room you haven't been able to enter yet. No, the mirror isn't there; all you can do is look around, but one item should give you a pretty good idea as to who nabbed the mirror. Have a chat with the culprit to obtain a clue to the mirror's location. This is tricky, because it's not in the chapel. Try the lord of the manor's room.

After Ellen pops off, you have to decide whether the angel or the devil gets her soul. We'll hope you make the right choice here, and then follow the winner's advice to bring the scenario to a successful conclusion.

END GAME

This is a little disappointing. The only one to send over, really, is Nimdok, because only he can operate the pit station to open the bridge. You can also ignore the five power nodes, as the game can be finished without touching them at all.

So Nimdok goes over, arriving on what looks like the surface of a brain. He carries five totems; these items come from the successful completion of each of the five scenarios, and all have their uses here. Look at them to see what they represent in this segment.

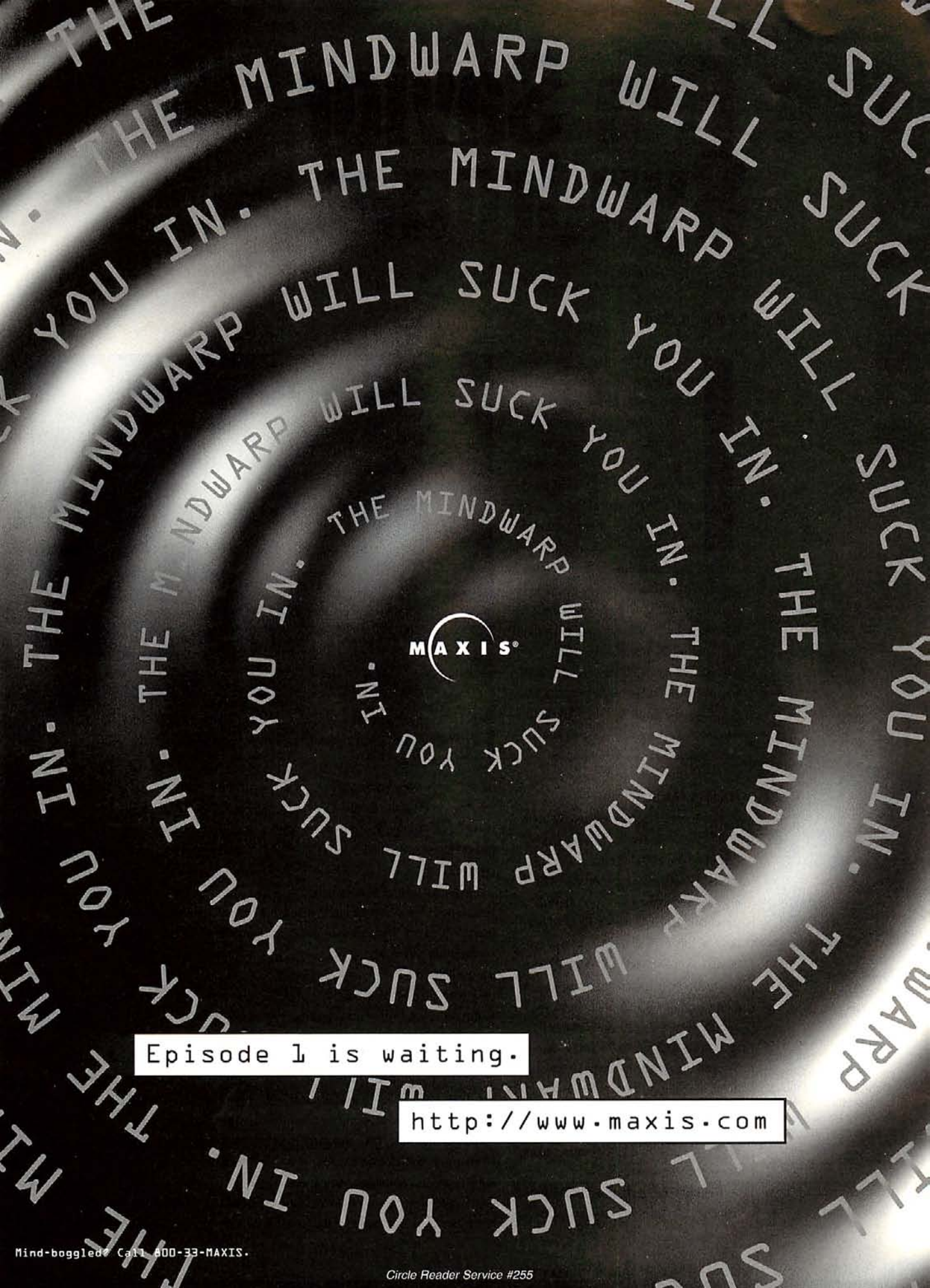
Once across the bridge, the first to use is obvious, and our friend Surgat shows up. Don't trust him too far. Eventually, the other two computers appear, and they have some instructions for you. I wouldn't trust *them* too far, either.

Three computers, three faces. I'll bet there's a connection here (heh). I'll bet there's also a connection with three of those totems, too. What to use where will be obvious after some conversation. That leaves only one item, and where to use that should also be obvious. Amazingly, the game comes to a happy ending, of sorts.

Whew! That's about it for now. Until next time, happy adventuring!

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

CG CHOICE

The Savior Syndrome

Despite Clichés, Legend Scores A Critical Sci-Fi Hit

by Martin Cirulis

I must admit to a dark secret: I have a problem with Adventure Games. Namely, I usually don't find them to be very adventurous. I grew up on the escapades of heroes, both real and literary, and, while they were all quick of mind and had to deal with the occasional maze, I don't remember any of them having to endure all the endless, inane, and unrealistic puzzles-disguised-as-problems that infest every square inch of the average computer adventure game. So it was with more than a little trepidation that I booted up MISSION CRITICAL, the new SF title from Legend. Fortunately, MISSION CRITICAL is a pleasant surprise, the rare game that can serve as an example of how to do a good, straightforward SF adventure.



ACCESS DENIED While this looks like a physical puzzle, it's actually a logic problem--and if you don't solve it, you'll never reach the computer in order to effect repairs.



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486-33 or better, 4 MB RAM, VESA compatible SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; supports SoundBlaster, General MIDI and compatibles.
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Mike Verdu
Publisher: Legend Entertainment Company
Chantilly, VA
(800) 658-8891
Reader Service #: 323

MILITIA FANTASIES

MISSION CRITICAL sports an extremely well fleshed-out story and background, except for the clichéd premise so common to SF adventure games: the Evil UN is spoiling everything, and only clever Americans can lead the way back to freedom. In this case, all those crazy foreigners take over the world and proscribe certain technologies, specifically nano-bot AI lifeforms, as being harmful to mankind. Eventually, a group of countries rebel against this motherly yoke and break away to form The Alliance, which fights in the name of unchecked scientific advancement, eating cake for breakfast and running with scissors. Of course, knowing what hotheads those UN types are, a long war of secession immediately breaks out; and attrition being what it is, the Alliance finds itself slowly losing ground and in desperate need of an unbeatable tactical advantage such as the accidental discovery of an Alien outpost on the distant hell-planet Persephone. This is where you come in.

You are an Alliance Naval officer and basic Good Guy, and while it isn't stated overtly which country leads the Alliance, your starship is the USS Lexington — leaving little doubt which way your apple pie is buttered. Your starfaring Battlecruiser is escorting a science ship into orbit around Persephone, when suddenly a UN Battleship pops out from around the far side of the planet and ravages both Alliance vessels so badly that your captain (played in near-subsonic fashion by *Star Trek: TNG's* Michael Dorn) must surrender. Fortunately, all is not lost, and in a Kamikaze maneuver, your Captain knocks you out to fool the enemy scanners and transports the crew of both vessels to the victorious UN Battleship. But much to everybody's chagrin, he also brings along a thermonuclear warhead that goes boom at the moment of docking.

This renders you both friendless and enemy-less in a single white flash, and incidentally leaves you with the almost impossible task of continuing the mission alone...but I guess Worf figured that a slim chance is better than no chance at all, and preferred to die rather than let the UN take the prize. Contrived? Yes, but you have little time to ponder this as you are greeted by the scream of escaping air, followed by the polite computer pointing out the deck you are on will soon blow out into space, unless somebody gets his act together and patches the hull breach.

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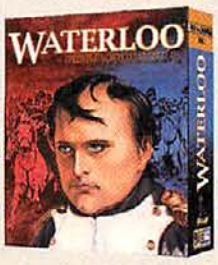
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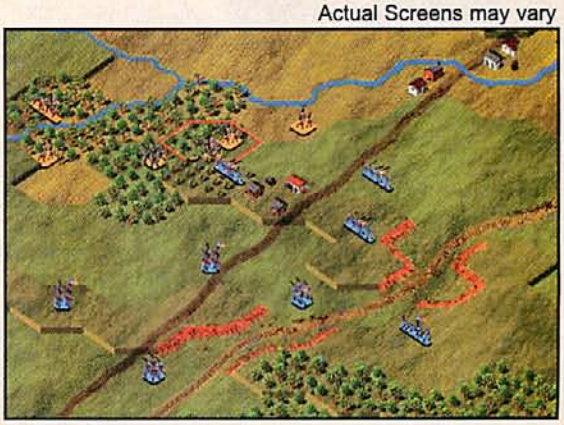
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video frame for the story, which consists of some pretty fair acting for 20-odd minutes at the beginning and another 10 or so at the end, you are faced with an SVGA first-person perspective game that initially looks like a well-done version of ALIEN VIRUS. Only after you begin moving about the *Lexington* do you realize that this is more like an SF version of THE 11TH HOUR, with that same high resolution moving-through-syrup feeling as you mouse-click your way down halls. While the SVGA look is modern, the actual game mechanics are classic tried-and-true adventure game stuff.



GALACTIC PLUMBER'S FRIEND Problem with the emergency coolant? No big deal—my Pocket of Infinite Storage lets me hike around with everything from a cutting torch to a Spacesuit.

While I'm sure none of this sounds revolutionary to most of you out there, the real strength of this game is not in the mechanics, but what you are expected to do with them. MC strives, and usually succeeds, in giving you realistic problems to solve, some of them lethal but most not. There is no game-playing security program or pointless maze in this game. Your task for the first half of the game is to get the *Lexington* functioning again so you can figure out exactly what is going on and then decide what you are going to do about it, but the beauty of this game is how much credit they give the player. Instead of insulting your intelligence with time-consuming "puzzle" tasks, MC gives you "real" tasks like figuring out how to reroute coolant into the reactor or fixing the antennae so you can get orders from the high command. Things are almost never as easy as they first appear, but the obstructions are organic to the story. Rarely do you feel the obtrusive monkey wrench of fate which designers use to stretch out adventure games or make them "more challenging."

Players should be warned that there is a major combat sequence in the middle of this game, but it is more tactical than arcade in execution. Players unwilling to mix strategy with their adventure can set the difficulty to its lowest level, and the game will run through it for you like another video sequence. Also, those expecting another DIG will be surprised that the exploration of the Alien base only comprises the last third of the game, and the resolution is probably far more philosophically complex than most players are used to.

MISSION: ENJOYABLE

MISSION CRITICAL has its problems, and for all the obvious work put into it, there is still a "first product" feel to the game that may put off the experienced gamer despite the good graphics and excellent sound. On the other hand, this game is both extremely stable and its system requirements are wonderfully low in this age of muscle machines and sloppy programming.

The story is good, recovering well from a weak start, with the wonderful fleshing out of the sets and backgrounds carrying most of the game. There is a small lack in the drama department, most of the climatic moments being well-conceived but a little too flat or cerebral to deliver a lot of excitement. On the other hand, the ending is probably one of the deeper ones I have seen lately.

While far different in execution, MISSION CRITICAL shares many sensibilities with Origin's SYSTEM SHOCK, another great SF adventure game, and I heartily recommend this game to anybody who isn't wearing a "I'm so clever I finished THE 11TH HOUR in 90 minutes" T-shirt. Even more importantly, I find myself eagerly awaiting the next adventure from these designers. CG

Snap-On Tools

MISSION CRITICAL takes very few cheap shots. Even so, some gamers may not be used to looking for key items where they should be in a large Starship, instead of having them close by the problem they are involved in. In a game where tools are very important and certain ones are used over and over, here is a short guide on where to find what you need in a hurry and a couple of hints on what to do with them.



GADGET HEAVEN As you look around for the devices you need, the clues aren't always obvious, but they're logical.

After you have sealed the hull and gained access to the rest of the ship, you'll have a few moments to shop around before the reactor core melts down and ruins your whole year. Zoom down to the science lab on Deck 5, where you'll find the very handy Geiger counter, and take the scanner as well (for some key views once you get down to Persephone). From there, zip down a level to Deck 6 and snag the extremely useful multi-tool that will carve open most things that seem to be more than they appear. The last key tool is the cutting torch, and can be found in Engineering once the Geiger counter helps you "hot-cold" your way down there. With these four gadgets and a clear head, you should be well on your way to getting your "Starship Repair" merit badge.

APPEAL: A great game for anyone who loves SF and wants to immerse themselves in another world.

PROS: Fast, enjoyable game on the same difficulty level as FULL THROTTLE. A pleasant departure from more puzzle-oriented adventure games.

CONS: Experienced adventure gamers might find it too short, and there are some flat spots in the story.

CG RATED ★★★★

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CAPITALISM

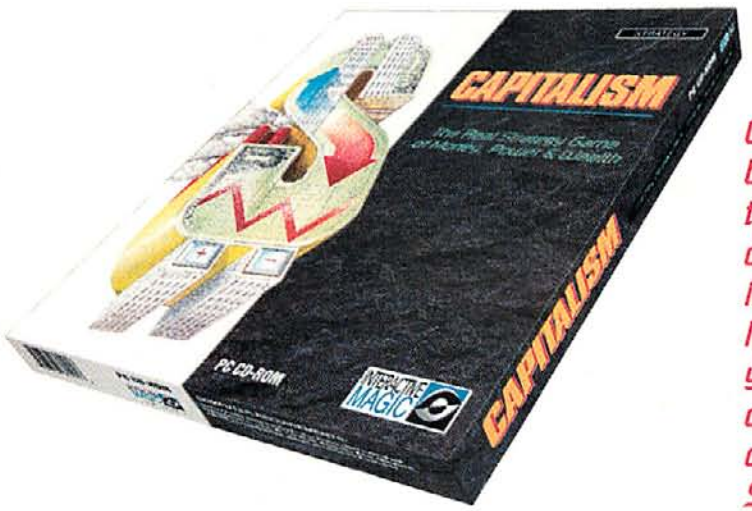
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Psychedelic Carny

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

The Residents Will Make You Think Twice About Those Carnival Hot Dogs

by Mark Clarkson

In the most broad sense, Inscape's BAD DAY ON THE MIDWAY *is* an adventure game. It plays out in a dark landscape that's equal parts bad dream and good mushroom trip, complete with off-center camera angles, blurry transitions, and carnival-esque attractions that defy description. One "ride" whisks you through a gallery of emotional scarring (Consumed by Unseen Self, Paralyzed by Mob Inertia, Brain Buried by Libido ...); another features graphic paintings of atrocities from the Spanish Civil War. There's even a sperm whale giving birth to an electric eel right across the midway from the Three-Headed Abominable Snowman.

Then there are the aptly-named *characters* ... a collection of eclectically pathetic souls that you don't just talk to, you *become*, seeing the world through their eyes, privy to their innermost thoughts.

There's Ike, the owner of the Midway, who feels a certain kinship with Hitler. His previous venture—a fascist miniature golf course where every Monday was "Master Race Day"—went under. Now that he's laid up with a bad coma following some unspecified accident involving acid, the Midway's in trouble, too.

Dixie, Ike's none-too-bright bride, is gamely trying to fill his shoes while pursuing her life-long dream of becoming an enchanted singing cowgirl, like the one in the stories her daddy used to tell. Her motley work force includes Otto, the whiny operator whose only friend is Oscar the Racing Rat; Dagmar, whose relationships with dogs and men are intertwined throughout her life and tattooed across her body; and Lottie the Human Log, who dances and sings a happy little song about the time her legs were mangled in an automobile accident.

PAUSE BRIEFLY FOR PLOT DEVELOPMENT

There's also a deranged psycho on the loose, working to rid the earth of ugliness by killing everyone and everything that offends his personal sense of aesthetics; even kittens aren't exempt. He collects scraps of this and that from his victims and fashions them into lovely "butterflies."

This is a dark game, populated with profoundly disturbed people sporting twisted world views. The only vaguely happy camper is Timmy, an innocent little boy given to Freudian dreams and wistful memories of his departed hamster, and even he's been known to shoot people. Everybody's got a story to tell, from Ike on down to the Racing Rat, and hearing as many of them as you can is a big part of the game.

I sat mesmerized by Bad Day on the Midway for nearly an hour, neither knowing nor caring what the plot was. As William Hurt says to Tom Berenger in *The Big Chill*, "Sometimes you just have to let art flow over you."

But it turns out there actually is a plot of sorts. Dixie is desperate to find tax papers with which to fend off the tenacious IRS agent, some money to pay the bills, or at least some more ammo for the Kill a Commie Shooting Gallery. ("Why don'cha come on in and knock off a few Commies?") Luckily, there's rumored to be a fortune in gold hidden somewhere on the Midway.

Meanwhile, the man who may be responsible for Ike's accident-that-weren't-no-accident is back, in disguise. As you play, time keeps ticking away; come nine o'clock, the Midway shuts down and the game is over, if you survive that long. There as many ways to die in Bad Day on the Midway as there are characters to play. You can be shot, murdered by the psycho killer or crushed beneath the skeleton of the three headed abominable snowman. And, oh, did I mention the plague? By nightfall, peo-



THE EYES HAVE IT Bizarre as it looks, the game's interface is sheer simplicity; take your time, because the clues you need are often a mere mouse click away.



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486-33DX or better, Windows 3.1 or better, 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 256-color Graphics, 2x CD-ROM, 16-bit sound card.
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Design: Jim Ludtke and Lain Lamb with The Residents
Publisher: Inscape
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ple are dropping like flies.

Playing the game through won't take you long: an hour or two. But with Bad Day's many characters, choices and surprising helpings of pure randomness, it's never the same two hours twice.

TILT-A-WORLD

The characters are played by stiff-jointed puppets with actors' faces projected onto their heads, composited into Bad Day's tilted, 3D-rendered world. The result is decidedly funky and not very realistic, but it fits well with the look and feel of the rest of this demented game.

The introductory sequence flies you over the midway then swoops down and punches straight through the back of cute little Timmy's head, leaving you looking out through his eyes. After that, any time another character stops to talk, you have the chance to "jump" to that character, trading one set of eyes and inner voices for another.

The characters' interior monologues play out in broken fragments across the bottom of the screen. It's a mistake to ignore them and go clicking your way frantically about the midway, looking for clues; most of your clues are right in front of you.

Rather than the typical, linear game where we follow a single character down a long, narrow plot path—find the key, enter the city, find the balloon, find the helium, fill the balloon, fly to Tumbolia—Bad Day offers a shorter, wider, more convoluted plot path which you experience over and over from different perspectives. No single pair of eyes sees everything; no one person knows the whole story. The point of the game is to play it through again and again, to explore the inner worlds of all the characters, to experience every possible ending, including all the death scenes.

While there is as much multimedia as game here, Bad Day nonetheless manages to tell several good stories, when most adventure games can't spin even one good tale. Jim Ludtke and The Residents have given the genre a much-needed spike of heroin—a dark glimpse into people's souls, exploring alienation and deformity and insanity and death, with a big dash of macabre humor. If this virtual drug trip isn't for you, fine. On the other hand, if you want to try something truly different, Bad Day may just be your ticket.

APPEAL: This is for anyone who can't stomach another goody-goody adventure game with cute elves and overly polite princes.

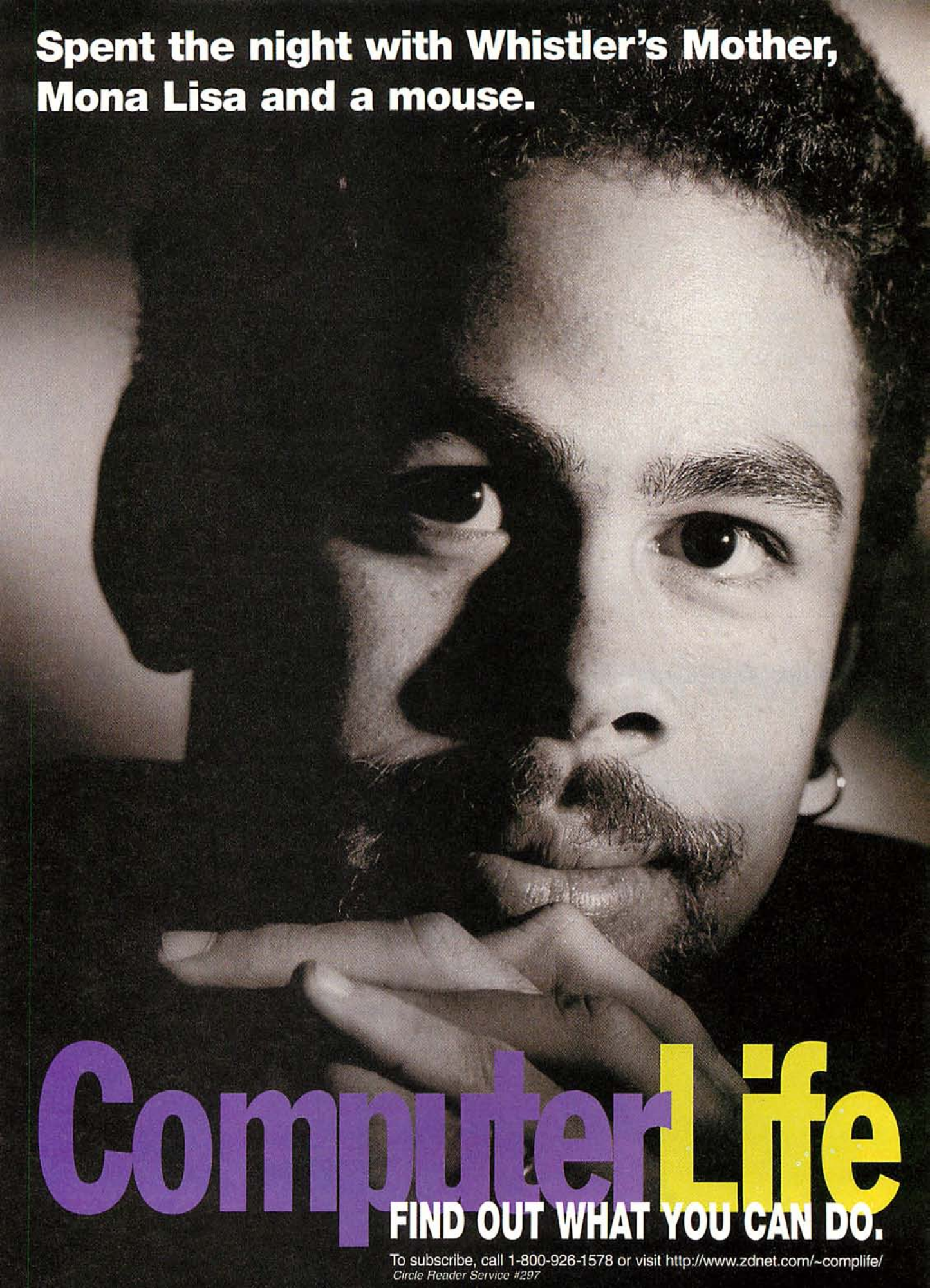
PROS: As bizarre as the entire experience is, the characters are so intriguing—even the ones you don't like—that they entice you to play again and again.

CONS: There are times when the game is *so* stylized that the plot development suffers too much, even for an "interactive art film."

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Deep In The Keep

A Traveler's Aid For Unlocking STONEKEEP's Toughest Puzzles

by Petra Schlunk

Do you ever stare at walls, unsure if they are real or imaginary? Tired of mystic symbols and unfeeling orbs that leave you cold? Will the purple mists around your head never clear? If so, you aren't alone—Interplay's STONEKEEP is filled with puzzles that can stump even experienced players. The following guide will take you to healing fountains, show you where keys are hidden, and what dangers to avoid. Be careful, however, lest you spoil the game for yourself by reading too far ahead of your current position.



WHAT A FAERY Give the Faeries what they want and they'll reward you with useful items and advice.

FROM RUINS TO SEWERS

First, find your way downstairs from the tower and head east. Go up the stairs in the southeast corner to find the nearest healing fountain. Mark this location; Drake will return here many times to recuperate from his battles. After you defeat the Shargas in the central room, you get Afri's Orb. Placed on the ground in front of Drake, this orb reveals hidden rooms and nearby unexplored areas.

On level two, find the illusionary walls by: 1) trying to walk through the walls—somewhat difficult; or, 2) wait until you have freed Farli the dwarf—let him detect the walls for you. Make sure to go down both stairwells from the first to the second level, or you may not find everything. The Ivory Key is on the second level in a room with two sacks of grain; this room is opened with an Iron Key dropped by three Shargas after a battle.

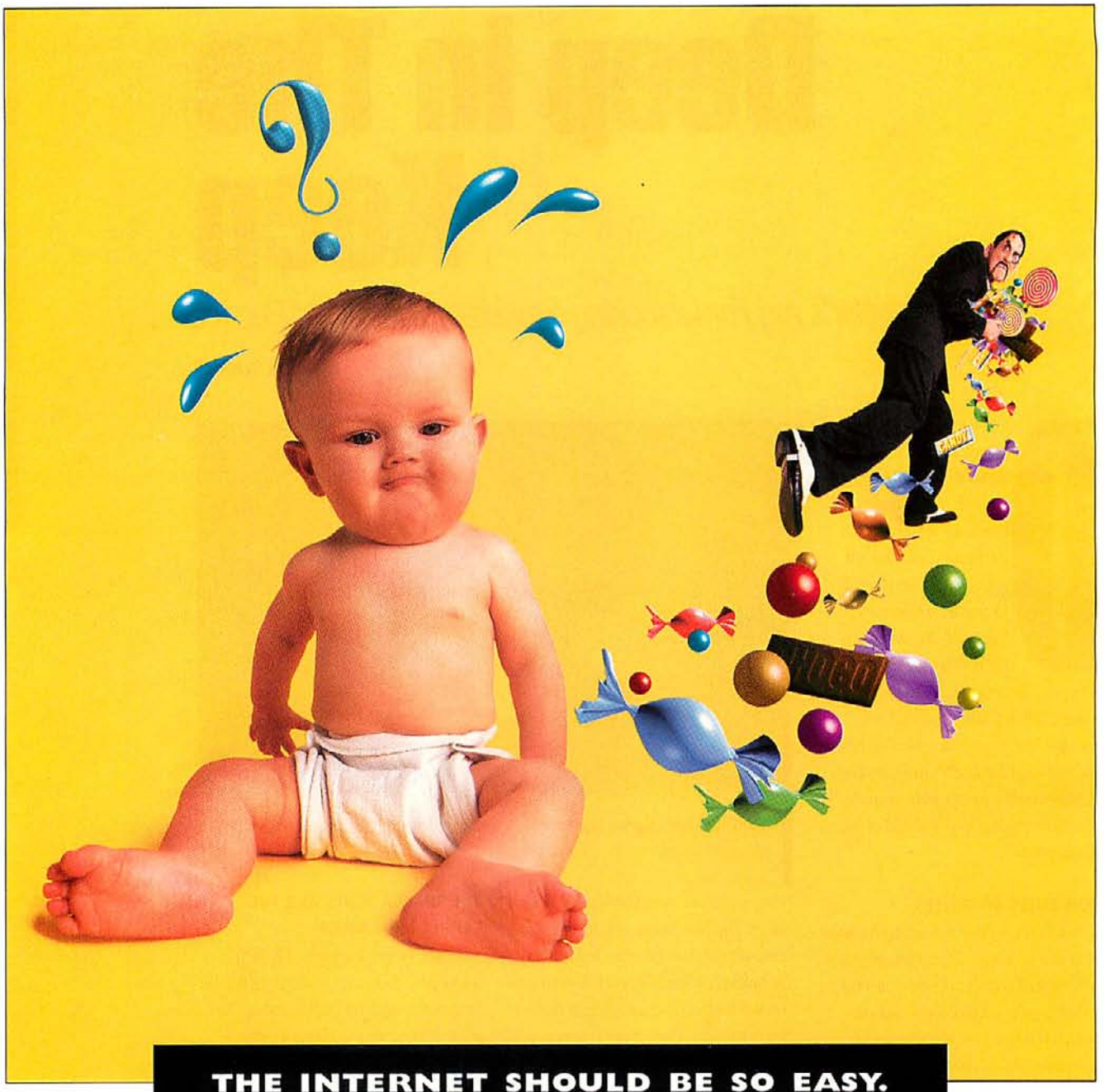
Two exits lead from the Ruins to the Sewers, and you must fully explore both routes. The Sewers can only be drained, however, with two cylinders hidden under the brackish water. Step back, literally, and you will find a cylinder in each of the two Sewer sections. Place these cylinders in the mounted drain cylinder switch control devices on the previous level, then press each device. This drains the Sewers and opens the two walls there that Farli commented on.

In the center of the Sewers lives a huge, tentacled beast. Kill the beast, brave adventurer, and get the small marble statue that it drops. In the area surrounding the beast's lair, listen for the sound of the whistling winds. When you hear them, go through the illusionary wall to your east, so that you can exit the Sewers. You find that you have re-entered the Ruins, but are in an undiscovered area. Once you find the pedestal, place the statue on it to open a passageway to the Sharga Mines.

THE SHARGA MINES AND THE TEMPLE OF THROGGI

In one area of the mines, Drake falls into a pit—it's inevitable, don't fight it. Be prepared to back up quickly, though, or a giant will smash your character with a huge boulder. Elsewhere, you find this same giant sleeping by a chest. He can't be killed, but you really must get to that chest—*how*? Once again, retreat; then smash the barrels near the chest with a ranged attack—firebombs work well for this. Afterwards, the Giant will have fled the premises, so you are free to recover the Throggish Key and Aquila's Orb from the chest. By using Aquila's Orb on the party, Drake can heal everyone two times on each level. The Throggish Key unlocks the western exit of the second level of the Mines, leading to the Temple Entrance.

Beware! A section of the Entrance is full of arrow traps. Make sure you've explored everywhere else that you can



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ELVEN FROZEN TREAT Cast a low level firebolt spell or use Helion's Orb to thaw out this frosty elf.

reach beforehand. Among the items you should find is a scroll on a dwarf's body. The scroll has a list of directions (right, forward, left) for getting through the arrow zone intact.

Now, take the stairs beyond the traps to reach the Temple of Throggi. While the Temple has a lot of puzzles, your main goal is to enter the temple proper (door with froggish face at the top), get an orb from a statue of Throggi, and exit the level. There are two ways into the inner temple. One is a secret passage that leads from a prison cell to the temple. The other is through the main entrance if you have fought Gorda Karn and recovered the Throg Pendant from him.

Inside the inner temple is a statue of Throggi. Steal one of his eyes; this is Azrael's Orb. Used on Drake, it endows him with Quickness, and you must have Azrael's Orb to pass the gate of spears near the entrance to this level in any case. Beyond the spear gate is the next level, the Feeding Grounds.

THE FEEDING GROUNDS AND DWARVEN FORTRESS

To reach the Feeding Grounds' second level, you must find one of two copper-colored Throggish Keys. There are two doors on level one with glowing green glyphs that damage Drake if he tries to pass them. Until Drake has been to Feeding Grounds level two, he won't be able to pass these glyphs safely.

Once you've reached level two of the Feeding Grounds, you find some red feathers. These allow your party to pass the glyphs on the doors upstairs. When you meet the chained dragon, you free her by finding two halves of a sturdy key.

Also on this level, you encounter the infamous purple wisps. Even if they irritate you (as they do the Dwarf), keep in mind that these wisps are faeries and therefore friendly! Where the Faeries disappear is the entrance to the Faerie Realm; keep this in mind for later. Meanwhile, you should check out another item on this level: a huge stone, made of magic flint, something you will definitely need later on.

After you've explored the accessible areas of level two of the Feeding Grounds, return to the first level and go through the glyphed doors, one of which leads to the Dwarven Fortress. Here you meet a blacksmith whose forge must be re-lit before he can help you. Take the magic chisel he gives you, and return to Feeding Grounds level two. Use the magic chisel on the large stone to get a piece of flint. Return to the fortress, re-light the forge and get the key fixed. With the now-whole key, first unlock the chains binding the dragon's legs and then the ones around her neck. After she leaves, you can explore the corridors that her body had previously blocked.

FAERIE REALM

Plant a primrose on the second level of the Feeding Grounds where faeries keep disappearing; this opens a small room to the east that leads to the Faerie Realm. Three things must be done here. First, find what each faerie is missing and get items or advice in exchange. Second, you must visit the Queen—the faeries are more than willing to offer advice, and give you some key items needed to see her. Third, you must explore the troll area. Do this only after you get the four-leafed clover from Sweetie. The clover lets you see the trolls, making it easier to kill these tough monsters.



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To see the Queen, you need two keys (from Giggles and Surly) and some primroses. Use the two large keys on a keyhole near the ground to the right of the spear gate. Go through the gate. Drop five primroses at the Queen's door (you may need to step back before dropping the primroses) and go twice around the square walkway in front of her door. Then you can enter and see the Queen in all her glory. Finally, be sure you kill *all* the trolls! You must find Yoth-Soggoth's Orb (which can recharge your runecasters) in the troll area.

ICE CAVERNS

Be sure that you complete the Faerie Realm before heading to the Ice Caverns. Here you must find a special weapon to show to Kandoc, leader of the local tribe. A hint: use Afri's orb often. When you see a "secret" area, try hitting the wall that blocks your way. There are two such breakable walls; behind one is the weapon, a blue ball of fire.

After you show Kandoc the blue fire, he leads you to a secret passageway. Go through the passage and kill the Ice Queen. She drops Helion's Orb, which is a warming orb. It thaws out any frozen characters and keeps your party from taking further damage in the Caverns. A new exit, south of the Ice Queen, opens after you kill her. This leads to the Gate of the Ancients.

GATE OF THE ANCIENTS AND THE PITS

Your main objectives here are to find: 1) the exit, in a secret area in the middle of the Gate of the Ancients; and 2) Safrinni's Orb. Explore this area carefully for illusionary walls, buttons and teleporters. Descend all pits and ladders you find to get to the Pits. Make sure you search all of them! It helps to mark explored ones on your map so you know where you've been.

In one of the first areas of the Pits are three rooms and a plaque that warns not to be greedy. Enter the middle room to get the Wolf Key, and use it to open a door in the Gate. In the area behind this door you find the Eagle Key, which in turn opens another area, where you find a Very Sturdy Key. This key opens the last door on this level.

To get to the center area (and the exit) of the Gate, go to the Pits, where you read a plaque about "rising above your station." Use Safrinni's Orb to float up through the hole in the ceiling at the end of this hallway, then try to walk through the walls you find. This may take a few tries until you find the right wall. When you manage to pass through to the center area., explore it carefully and be sure you have six orbs before you leave.

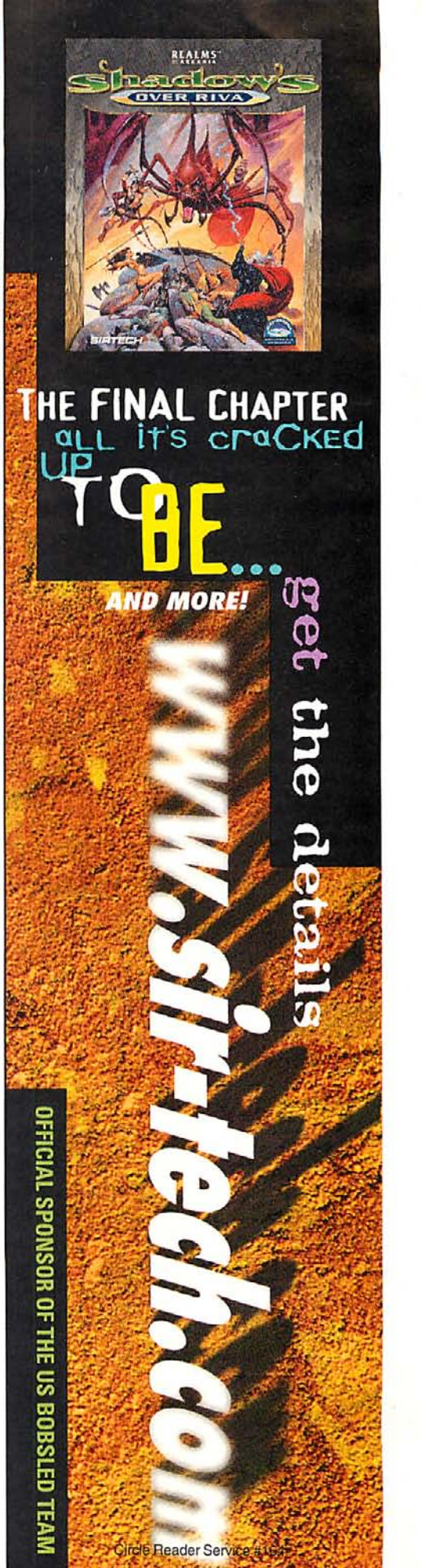
THE PALACE OF SHADOWS

The Palace has left and right sides that are mirror images of one another. So, when you find a button or illusionary wall during your explorations, understand that there will be one just like it on the other side of the dungeon.

In the Palace, you find two mystic symbols. Placing both symbols together in the places where you found them reveals the entrance to the central halls of the palace. Down the center, Marif's giant orb blocks your way, so shrink and collect it. This orb gives great strength and allows you to pass formerly impenetrable barriers. Past one of these barriers is a floating skull called Scourge; near him is the exit to Khull



KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY ORBS In the final confrontation, bravery and strength will get you nowhere. Try trapping Khull Khumm instead.



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Khuum's Tower. The exit is obscured by a magical barrier; break it by casting Spoilspell or Murphy's Rune.

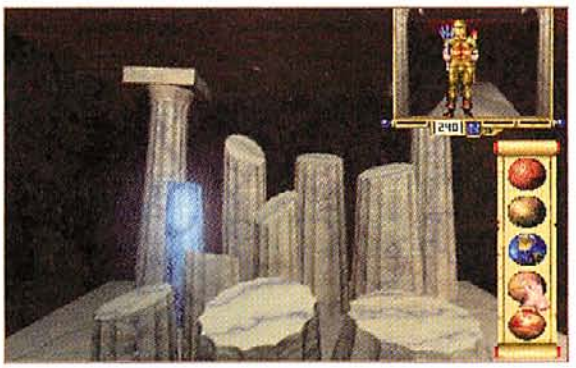
KHULL KHUUM'S TOWER

The Tower has four levels in addition to the Lair of the Dark Dwarves that you can reach from the first level of the tower. Don't go straight up the stairs as suggested by the gargoyle at the beginning of level one! Most of the tower levels have many illusionary walls and buttons that open secret passages; so be extra careful exploring. Before your final confrontation with Khull Khuum, there are a few things you must do.

Recover a scroll with strange markings from the Dark Dwarves. Use these markings (ignore spacing, lines, and capitalization) to solve the puzzle behind a loose brick in the hallway opposite the door that damages Drake when he tries to open it.

On level one, recover the silver ankh and find the shimmering cross on a wall. There are several places in the tower where you will find such ghostly markings. You must have the corresponding silver item to pass through these walls, to be teleported elsewhere.

On the next two levels find the remaining three silver items and use them to go through any walls that bear shimmering symbols. On the third level you will find a wall with all four symbols. Passing this wall takes you to the fourth level of the tower.



THESE COLUMNS DON'T ADD UP You'll have to place the correct orb on the highlighted pillar to restore the temple and win the game. See the table for a description of the orbs.

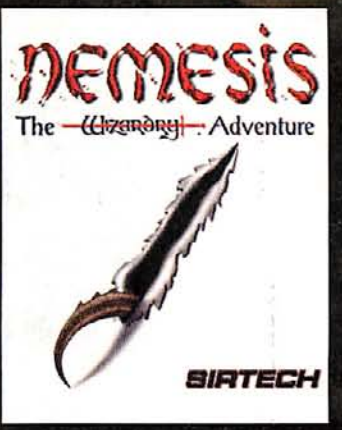
Khull Khuum is on the fourth level, in the very center. You must step into the center square to meet him. You cannot kill him; you must trap him instead. Use the four silver items on the plates around the center to trap Khull Khuum and destroy him.

With the orbs you get from Khull Khuum, you are ready for the last challenge. Head south through a newly appeared wall with four markings to get to Thera's Temple.

THERA'S TEMPLE

Of the nine pillars in the Temple, only one at a time will be highlighted. You must put the correct orb on each pillar to restore the temple. The orbs represent planets and they go on in planetary order, according to the table below. As soon as you place the last orb correctly you will hit the epilogue. Congratulations!

Orb Of...Description	
Helion	gold with red stippling
Aquila	golden, healing
Thera	Earth
Azrael	red, quickness
Marif	red and gold swirl
Afri	gold with ring, mapping
Safrinni	green
Yoth-Soggoth	medium blue with horizontal dark blue swirls
Kor-Soggoth	blue-gray



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Solve The Master's Riddle

A Speed Learning Course In Ancient Chinese Secrets

by Arinn Dembo

It isn't easy following in the footsteps of a master—especially a canny old genius like Master Lu. If you've run into some obstacles while guiding Robert Ripley through the twists and turns of this game, I've got just the clue for you.

Pei-Ping, first visit: Having trouble getting rid of that pesky peasant? Tired of seeing the charming snapshot of Ripley's grave? The key to handling this guy is what he does for a living: collecting salvage metal. The only way to get him off your back is to arrange a distraction with a valuable piece of metal—say, by putting it where he can't immediately reach it.

Pomerania: Finding the entrance to the Baron's secret laboratory is difficult, unless you're a real ace. It's in the billiards room, naturally—but where? There was a clue for you when you opened the drawer of the games cabinet—something was missing. Bet it's hanging around here somewhere!

Once you escape from the Baron's lab, of course, there's still the problem of breaking into his tomb. You're going to have to go back to New York and get someone to help you on this caper—don't forget to bring refreshments for the trip.

PUZZLED IN PERU

There are three important locations in Peru, and you should thoroughly search all of them, including the one you're standing in—the Posh Express office.

Mocha Moche: Here's your chance to get rid of that cursed Emerald; but I'm sure you've already figured out who you can palm it off on. The main challenge here is keeping Ripley alive while he hangs over the side of the tower, trying to recover a gleaming artifact from the skeleton niche. The key to solving this dilemma is a simple formula: two vines equal one rope, so long as Ripley doesn't have to trust his full weight to them.

Easter Island: It takes an odd combination of engineering, navigation and arts n' crafts skills to get through this part of the adventure. Ripley will have to do quite a bit of extra leg work. Here're a few suggestions to move things along:

The first thing to do is get the Watching God back on his feet; it's going to take some leverage to accomplish this. The fulcrum (base) of your lever is lying on the beach. I'm sure you can put together the rest out of simple campsite materials. As for the Watching God's missing eye, it has been broken into two parts: the pupil's location is as plain as the nose on your face, but the white of the eye has been taken from the island.

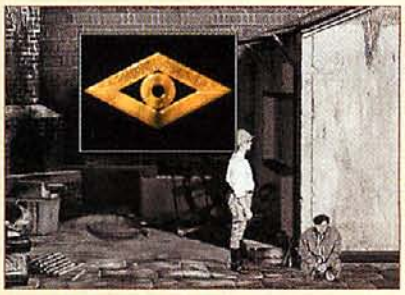
Dr. Twelvetrees' shed is awfully useful. Ripley should search the place at least once before exploring the quarry, and he may find something in there to get himself and Twelvetrees out of a jam. He just has to be careful not to blow his own horn until the trap is set.

Sikkim: The Temple of the Hidden

Scaling The Wall



Near the Hall of Classics, go behind the blacksmith's shop to collect the pitons from the wheel.



In the alley, take a look at the beggar's pile of junk, and buy the stone amulet with your yuen.

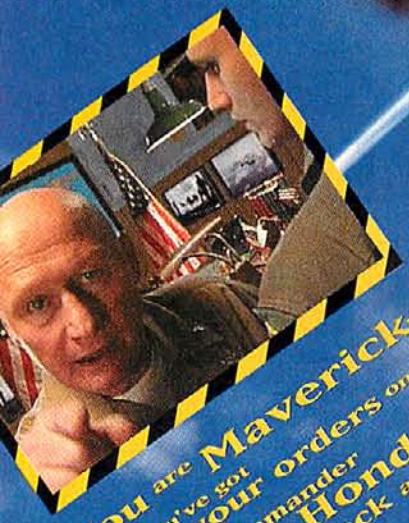


To get rid of the beggar, you must first trade your photo for her WWI helmet. Then scale the wall to the Hall.

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Way presents an interesting series of problems. The monks here are cryptic, deliberate creatures; virtually every word spoken, both at the gate and at the Temple, has two meanings. Of course, you won't get through the gate at all unless you figure out how to pass as one of the brothers. The mark of the temple is the ring that the gatekeeper wears on his forefinger. Look through your inventory; the Baron may have given you more than one key.

The challenge of the Temple is threefold. The gatekeeper has told Ripley that five of the Brothers have been given the wrong prayer wheels. Ripley must rearrange those five prayer wheels until each monk has the correct wheel. To be brief, the monks with the incorrect prayer wheels are in cells #4, #6, #9, #12, and #15.

Keep in mind that a monk who knows a certain prayer does *not* need the prayer wheel for that virtue. It took me some time to realize that Ripley was also supposed to be looking for the Brother who had been studying in the Temple longest. Why? Well, because Ripley is seeking the Hidden Way—and, as the gatekeeper said, "Only he who studies longest knows the Hidden Way!" The problem of the prayer wheels is actually an elaborate logic problem, a test to see whether supplicants are intelligent enough to be allowed into the Temple.

Here's the solution. USE the prayer wheel brochure to identify the wheels, and give each to the appropriate monk:

Monk #4
Knows Prayer of Insight
Has Wheel For Serenity
Needs Wheel for Wisdom

Monk #6
Knows Prayer of Wisdom
Has Wheel for Peace
Needs Wheel for Serenity

Monk #9
Knows Prayer of Truth
Has Wheel for Insight
Needs Wheel for Peace

Monk #12
Knows Prayer of Peace
Has Wheel for Truth
Needs Wheel for Insight

Monk #15
Knows Prayer of Serenity
Has Wheel of Wisdom
Needs Wheel for Truth

When all the prayer wheels have been put in place, talk to Monk #9, the senior monk, who can open the Hidden Way. The Hidden Way is in cell #14, and consists of a maze beneath the temple (see "The Amazing Maze").

When you reach the exit from the maze (it has a rather complicated ladder apparatus instead of four ropes hanging in the center) PULL the rope in the upper left corner to lower the ladder. Climb the ladder into the cupola, look at and sketch the copy of Master Lu's writings, then climb back down the ladder. Finally, at the Sikkimese Posh Express Office, send the bone chisel and the incense burner to Feng Li, and buy a ticket to Pei-Ping.

Pei-Ping, second trip: This episode can be frustrating, since Ripley has so little control over the unfolding of events. There is no way to remove the gun from the brazier. The only way to protect Ripley from the exploding bullets is to shield him—or to use an object shaped like a shield. Once our heroes are no longer in danger of imminent death, and Ripley has his journal back, there's still the problem of recovering the solution to Master Lu's puzzle. Kuang ripped out the vital page of Ripley's notes, and there's no way of getting it back—or is there? Take another look at the journal, and consider that Ripley has to press awfully hard to make those bold, thick lines when he's sketching.

The Emperor's Tomb: The farmer has everything you need to break into the tomb; don't be afraid to ask him for equipment. Once you're in, the solution to Master Lu's Riddle will become imminently clear. The last hurdle in the tomb is one of the most difficult; a lake of mercury bars Ripley from the entrance to the Emperor's mausoleum. Keep in mind, however, that mercury is much denser than water (and thus has a higher surface tension), and a somewhat silly solution may present itself. I hope you didn't forget anything at the jade door.

If these clues aren't enough to help you bag the Seal of the Emperor Shih Huang-di, all is not lost. A complete walk-through is available on the Net. See "Following in the Footsteps of the Master" on *CGW*'s web page: http://www.zd/.com/~gaming

CGONLINE

The Amazing Maze

As mazes go, The Hidden Way isn't the worst you'll see; at least it contains no deadly surprises or traps. Since the maze is rectangular, consisting of square rooms connected by paths of light, the best way to get through it is to create an old-fashioned map on graph paper. The Hidden Way is 11 rooms in length (I would suggest making this a height measurement) and nine rooms in width. Counting from the top and left, Ripley enters the maze in the fifth room of the second column. There are artifacts to be collected in the maze: an incense burner in the bottom room of the eighth column, and a bone chisel in the ninth room of the first column. You can collect these if you wish, but Ripley doesn't need them to solve any puzzles. The exit to the maze is in the sixth room of the fifth column. If you have absolutely no luck mapping the maze yourself, you can try to follow this sequence of directions: it should take you to the exit. (R=door to the right side of the screen, L=door left side of the screen, U=door top of the screen, D=door bottom of screen)

D-R-D-D-L-D-D-L-D-R-R-U-U-R-D-D-R-U-U-R-R-U-L-L-U-L-U-U-L-U-R-U-L-U-L-D-L-U-U-R-R-R-R-D-D-R-R-R-R-D-D-D-D-D-D-L-U-U-L-L-U-L (EXIT)

Building Your Collection Of Exotics

Location Oddities to be Collected

Pei-Ping
Rebus Amulet, Silver Butterfly

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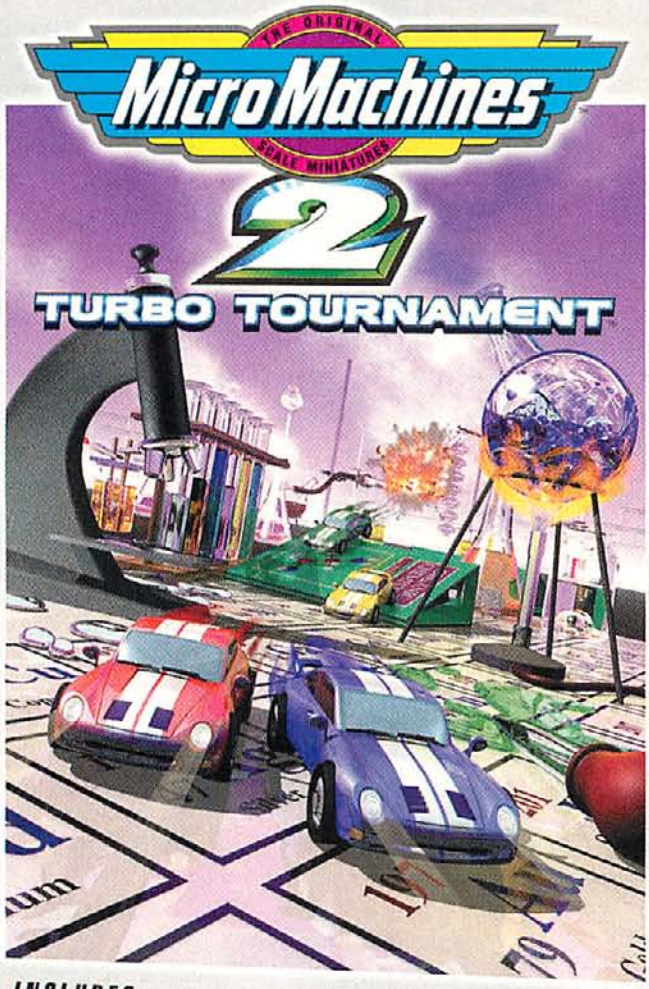


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Circle Reader Service #234

A Break In The Action

Mixing RPG Elements With Action Could Lead To STRIFE



The bloom came off the rose early. WOLFENSTEIN 3-D changed forever the way gamers thought about action and the IBM, but it also suffered from a basic limitation: You went around killing people. That was pretty much *it*. And, five years later, that's still pretty much it.

STRIFE, scheduled to be published in May by Velocity, takes this evolution another step. This 29-level action-adventure, developed by Rogue Entertainment, finally pushes the DOOM II engine into RPG territory. It has potential, and a first look suggests you'll want to take another.

The story so far: A comet struck your home planet. It released a virus, and millions perished. Others were not so lucky: they mutated, and the mutants, responding to the voice of an evil God in their heads, formed a ruling class called The Order. (Yes, as you've probably gathered, there's some larger force at work here.)

Meanwhile, you're just trying to stay alive. If you manage that, you'll eventually find yourself working for the resistance movement as a "problem-solver."



SHOOT THE BREEZE? STRIFE introduces RPG elements designed to make players think first before shooting.

> "STRIFE makes the story integral to the gameplay."

Why do I even bother setting the scene? After all, the stories that accompany action games are usually irrelevant. They take up a couple of pages in the manual and an end-of-episode screen, but enjoy no real in-game existence.

CYBERMAGE began to change that, and STRIFE makes the story integral to the gameplay. If you like, you can race through the game, shooting, grabbing and filling up your inventory. (Nice touch: You can drop stuff.) It's an action game, after all, and you can't be everybody's friend. You'll especially enjoy wreaking havoc with the flame-thrower, which reduces all comers to a burning crisp.

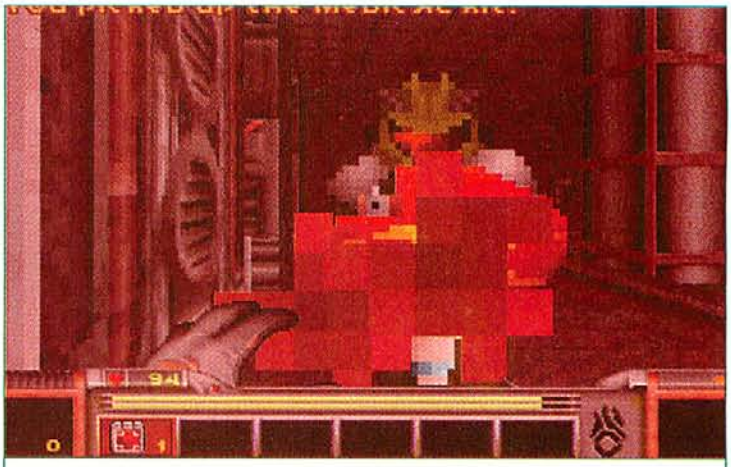
But perhaps you're better off talking and thinking and maybe *then* shooting. After all, there are non-player characters to be questioned. Sometimes you'll get the '96 equivalent of "Ugh, me tough." But other times you'll be able to extract a useful nugget (after extracting a useful nugget from your own purse)—for instance, that it's gunplay that sets off the alarms in town. You can even question the acolytes you encounter when the game

INSIDE ACTION

Maxis, known for their SIM line of games, is jumping into the action genre with a 3-D shooter that is part DESCENT and part MICROCOSM. Called THE MINDWARP, this game starts you in space, where you are swallowed by an immense organic entity called, appropriately enough, The Mindwarp. This title will allow full 360-degree movement, the kind that DESCENT pioneered, although it is distinguished from other DOOM-clones by its organically-themed levels (you look like you're flying inside a giant esophagous) and by virtue of its adventure-style plot. While inside The Mindwarp, you will have to find the Dream Fragments, which when joined together will unlock the secrets of this organic leviathan and reveal why it is in your corner of space. Fear not, though, action fans, for this game is, at its heart, an action game, so Maxis assures that there will be plenty of creatures to destroy. The game won't be out until summer, but watch for a one-level demo of THE MINDWARP at Maxis' website at *http://www.maxis.com*.

begins. At least, they're honest in saying: "We're going to kill you!" And so they are, unless you set about using that little dagger in your right hand.

Consider: early in the game, you'll run into a fellow named Harris, who'll set you on a mission. His voice is sly, his forehead is high and his eyes don't quite look in the same direction. You wouldn't buy a used personnel carrier from this man. And, sure enough, you may discover in the course of your mission that Harris is a rat. Take the key he offers when you return from your sojourn, and you're setting yourself up for a deadly trap in the governor's office. Kill him, as he so richly deserves, and you're on your way to finding the hidden rebel headquarters.



MY, WHAT BIG PIXELS YOU HAVE STRIFE's graphics still need some work, evinced by this wounded soldier's Lego-land look.

You'll find money along the way (a nod to CYBERMAGE here), and can use it to buy weapons and armor in shops, and treatment at the hospital. You'll find trainers who will improve your skills, whose lessons will ensure that you shoot straighter as the game progresses. And you have allies. You can't command them, but, in the fashion of the armed "Bobs" of MARATHON II, can use their presence to good effect.

The concept of levels has changed as well. You know how it usually works: walk in one end, kill everything that gets in your way and walk out the other. Here, they're not so much levels as pieces of an environment that flow into and out of one another, which you will cross and re-cross through many avenues. (In the demo, the town connects with the Order's sanctuary in three separate places.)

Saving is also handled differently. In DOOM, you could save anywhere—on the cusp of every crisis—and that shortened the life of the game. Here, you can still try to save anywhere, but STRIFE records your progress only if you've reached certain benchmarks. Unlike the MARATHONS, which used this concept to fine, game-lengthening effect, STRIFE handles it invisibly. (After all, having a game-saving device on a wall is rather unrealistic, isn't it?) This should at least make players more cautious. Dead isn't dead here, but dying invariably means you'll have to replay some portion of the game. It's a good idea; the action game in which death isn't a threat isn't much of a game.

Not to say that everything was just hunky-gory in the teaser. Some wall tiles and certain item and character graphics were rather muddy and broadly-drawn. The designers didn't seem to have done much with spot lighting effects—the whole place is lit up like a basketball court—or more general ones that might reflect the passage of time (a useful tool in an RPG). The single saved position per character may not sit well with DOOMers accustomed to saving at every dark corner, and would seem to invite the player to paint himself into corners. Afterall, if you saved after a crucial mistake, you'll have to restart the game, since recovering from your saved point won't do you any good; you already saved after the fact, remember? This can be a real problem if you've played for dozens of hours and are suddenly forced to restart the game. Playing from the beginning can be frustrating, but this approach definitely makes you think, and can lead to more intelligent gameplay.

But while I have trouble with some of the details, STRIFE looks like a solid game. It seems the DOOM engines are going to be with us for a while yet. The action-RPG is here. And the bloom is back on the rose.

CG TIPS!

DESCENT II has been out for over a month now, and it's 360-degree, 3-D action has been commanding the attention of action gamers everywhere. Here are some cheats to alleviate frustration and mortality. To use these cheats, simply type them in while playing. You don't need to type anything to initialize the cheats. But you can try typing gabbagabbahey, the old DESCENT cheat-enabling code, for a little surprise. The cheats are not case sensitive and will work with the DESCENT II demo on the CG-ROM.

Descent II Cheat Codes

BITTERSWEET—Creates a warping effect on screen.
ERICAANNE—All weapons bounce off walls and doors, though they still do damage to enemies.
MOTHERLODE—Gives you all weapons and full ammunition.
CURRYGOAT—Immediately gives you all keys.
EATANGELOS—All weapons automatically home-in on targets.
JOSHUAAKIRA—Automatically provides you with a complete map of the current level.
WHAMMAZOOM—Warps you to any level.
ALIFALAFEL—Immediately gives you all accessories.
ZINGERMANS—Bestows invulnerability.



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"Sequel of the year!"
Computer Game Review

DESCENT™ II

Download the 3-level demo at http://www.interplay.com

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Building The Ultimate Visual System

With the recent boom in multimedia, everybody wants brilliant graphics that display instantly. But to get the ultimate visual quality, you need to build a *visual system*. The best tool to boost your computer's visualization is an add-in board called a graphics accelerator that dramatically improves graphics through greater resolution, color and speed. The result is better overall system performance. Applications run faster, and shifts between applications and pages are quicker. Games, CD-ROMs and spread sheets perform better and video playback is more vivid. Within the accelerator category, a range of solutions are available.

See more, do more

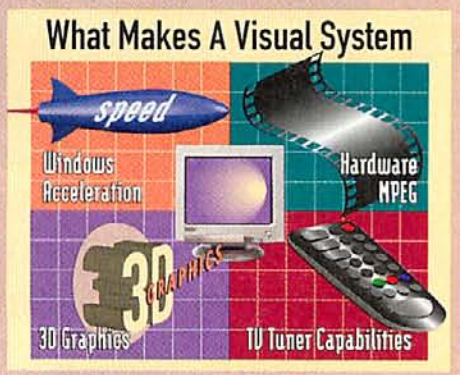
Let's say you have a computer and a 15-inch monitor that offers 800 X 600 resolution. For running applications like Microsoft® Excel, Word, and (when no one is looking) some games, the best strategy is to find a 64-bit accelerator.

Check the bus

Make sure the accelerator is compatible with your computer's bus; the pathway connecting the new card to the computer's microprocessor. If your computer is a Pentium, it probably uses a PCI bus. A VL-bus is usually found on a 486, while older computers are likely to have an ISA bus. 64-bit accelerators in this category include the Stealth64 Graphics 2000 Series (VLB and PCI), and the SpeedStar 64 Series (ISA), both between $100 and $150.

Get started today without a big expense

To take advantage of applications with video, like multimedia encyclopedias, opt for a multimedia accelerator with 2MB DRAM. On top of improved 2D graphics performance (such as a Stealth64 or SpeedStar), a multimedia accelerator adds full-screen digital video playback, including software MPEG, to your visual system. Be sure a multimedia accelerator supports your operating systems and includes software to customize your desktop with features like resolution switching on-the-fly. Diamond Multimedia's Stealth64 Video 2001

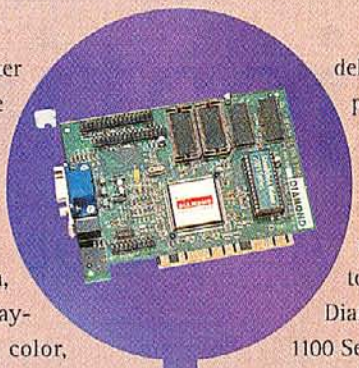


Series incorporates all these features, at a starting price of just $150 and includes Diamond's InControl Tools desktop productivity software, and supports most operating systems, including Windows 95.

Select the performance level you need

If you are using more graphically intensive programs or are using a larger monitor with high resolution, such as 1280 X 1024, you should consider a multimedia accelerator with faster memory, such as VRAM, for more visual horsepower. The more video memory, the higher color depth, the greater resolution your system can achieve, and the faster your screen displays will move. Look at the Diamond Stealth64 3000 Series, at a starting price of $299.

Video On My PC



Some of the hottest computer systems today are those equipped with MPEG playback. MPEG technology compresses and decompresses digital video and audio to deliver full-motion, full-screen digital video playback with realistic clarity, color, resolution, and sound. Diamond offers a video playback board, the Stealth64 Video 2001 which enables these types of capabilities.

Video adds a new association

Using video to educate and train via computer allows people to learn through actually seeing the lesson, providing detail and intimacy that text alone cannot provide. In the realm of entertainment, the Internet and commercial online services are loaded with video clips of favorite actors, musicians and politicians. With MPEG, those video clips can be viewed at full-screen, full-motion.

There's MPEG and then there's MPEG!

One point of distinction within MPEG is hardware versus software. MPEG software is the more common. But for higher resolution, higher quality video applications, with lip-sync, smooth motion and interactivity, as well as maximum playback speed (referred to as "frame rate"), hardware MPEG is the preferred solution. Because hardware MPEG ensures a consistent rate of playback at 30 frames per second while delivering remarkably clear playback of video clips, movies, and games, it can offer improved performance on older slower systems, and add the ability to listen to CD-quality MPEG audio. Diamond's MPEG Video Player 1100 Series daughtercard, at $129, offers the additional performance of hardware MPEG technology, with the Stealth64 Video 2001 Series multimedia accelerators. This Stealth product utilizes the Scenic/MX2 MPEG decoder from S3, a leading supplier of MPEG solutions.

I want my PC TV

New TV tuner technology takes the marriage of video and computers even further. This technology allows a broadcast, cable TV, or a VCR signal to be displayed on your monitor, either in a window or full-screen. You can even capture single frame or video clips with this new capability. Imagine having part of your screen dedicated to a stock quote broadcast while working on a PowerPoint presentation. Imagine putting that image in your PowerPoint presentation! You can get that capability with Diamond's DTV 1100 TV tuner, at $129. It's another upgrade option for the Stealth64 Video 2001 Series of multimedia accelerators.

Business and Entertainment Graphics Supported by S3's ViRGE

S3 Inc., the leader in multimedia acceleration for PCs, has introduced 3D technology to its complete line of award-winning 2D graphics and video accelerators. Called ViRGE, this single-chip solution delivers for the first time, powerful 3D rendering, fast 2D graphics acceleration, full-screen digital video and optional support for hardware MPEG and TV tuner/video capture to the mainstream PC market. The flexibility of its design provides for a variety of 3D multimedia accelerator configurations that improve the performance of multiple operating systems as well as business, professional and entertainment applications. Shaping the future of 3D, the S3 ViRGE can be found on the Diamond Stealth 3D 2000 series. Contact S3 through the Internet at http://www.s3.com

"Computing is more visual than ever before."

New Dimensions In 3D

3D technology goes one step beyond standard multimedia accelerators and brings a completely new experience to computing. Multimedia presentations incorporating 3D deliver more impact than 2D graphics. With 3D accelerators, graphics arts, action games, and 3D on the Internet are more realistic. For gamers, 3D signifies a new level of immersion and interactivity. The technology allows for crisper graphics at resolutions as high as 1024 X 768. Better 3D accelerators also support the special effects used in the newest 3D games, including texture mapping and perspective correction. Many are designed specifically for Windows 95, so be sure the one you choose supports the new Microsoft DirectX APIs that game developers will be supporting. Many 3D multimedia accelerators are multi-function, and have features like real-time 3D and 2D photo-realistic graphics, full-screen, full-motion digital video and hardware.

Diamond offers a family of choices in 3D

Diamond's EDGE* 3D multimedia accelerators incorporate all of these features and come with Sega Saturn compatible control pads*. Starting at $249 for 1MB of DRAM, it is bundled with the Sega titles: Virtua Fighter™ Remix, Panzer Dragoon™ and NASCAR® Racing from Papyrus. Diamond's Stealth 3D multimedia accelerator (available June '96) delivers high-performance 3D animation, fast 2D graphics and digital video playback acceleration, providing advanced performance for multimedia, games and business applications. Starting under $249 for a 2MB EDO DRAM version, it is bundled with professional software (Asymetrix's 3D/FX™ and Digital Video Producer™) as well as cool games (Interplay's Descent™ II and Sony's Destruction Derby™).

For more information on visual systems contact Diamond at http://www.diamondmm.com/visad-cgw

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The answer for many telecommuters and home-based businesses lies in a powerful, integrated communications system. A comprehensive product delivers complete Internet access, file transfer, fax, voice messaging and e-mail, as well as transfer rates to 28.8 Kbps and beyond. Such a solution can also distinguish between incoming fax, data and voice calls on the same line. Conveniences important to small business such as: remote network access, Caller ID, alpha-numeric LCD display, and pager notification of messages are also available. Now anyone can add a full-spectrum digital switchboard to their computer. Big business no longer has the communication advantage!

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Rules for the road

Don't access the Internet at less than 28,800 bps unless you're ready for a nap.

The higher your transfer rates, the lower your access fees and long distance charges.

The better the compression technology, the faster your transfer rate.

Look for features such as headset support, Caller ID, and message notification by pager, fax or phone.

Remote access to fax and voice messages will help you keep in touch while you're out of the office.

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- Publish your artwork or writing
- Read product reviews

"What does it take to surf the Net, send and receive e-mail, and download that Web page everyone is talking about?"

Jumping On The Internet — Without Falling

The Internet is leading the remote connectivity charge. But with all the buzz about the Internet, many people are still relatively confused about what it all means and how to take advantage of it properly. Although the Internet is growing rapidly due to soaring business demand, an estimated 90% of American homes are yet to be connected. Lively discussions about the hottest Web sites, who is the best Internet provider, and how to get online without headaches fill the business press as well as popular news magazines and even Ladies Home Journal. What does it take to surf the Net, send and receive e-mail, and download that Web page everyone is talking about? One of the simplest solutions is to get a comprehensive Internet kit that offers everything needed to get wired quickly and painlessly. Now you don't have to be a technician to enjoy this new realm of communication!

"The Internet is leading the connectivity charge."

But buyer beware. There are many kits available that offer partial or non-integrated solutions. For example, some kits contain software only. Others provide a lower speed 14.4 Kbps modem along with off-the-shelf software (or shareware) and an Internet book – none of which is specifically integrated to work together. A complete solution will have you surfing quickly and simply because the modem, software, Internet service provider and manuals are designed to work together seamlessly and are supported by an established leader in communications. To reduce Internet access fees and prevent watching your screen download a single file for 15 minutes, choose a state-of-the-art, high-speed, 28.8 Kbps modem. To take full advantage of the speed, you'll also want to connect with an Internet service provider that can be accessed at 28.8 Kbps (not all of them can). Your provider should also have local access numbers in your area (so you're not paying a long distance fee each time you call), and enough ports to handle a large number of customers (so you don't get a busy signal when you want access). You'll also want to ensure that your kit comes with one integrated software program that encompasses all the primary services the Internet offers: e-mail, the World Wide Web, Gopher, USENET and FTP. Finally, while it will be simple to hop on the Internet with a good kit, make sure the included documentation and manuals specifically address all the items in the kit. All the features required for easy Internet access are available in the Supra Simple Internet 288. This comprehensive solution, over a $300 value, is priced well under $200 and includes a CD-ROM tutorial as well as an Internet Directory.



The SupraSonic 288V+

If you're a professional or serious user, you'll want the performance and messaging capabilities of the SupraSonic 288V+, a fax/voice/data modem. Small or home-based businesses will find extremely useful features like: a headset, an intuitive LCD display, Caller ID, fax-on-demand, remote access to faxes and voicemail, all necessary cables, and a friendly user-familiar interface.



Supra Simple Internet 288

Integration. That's the key to finding the right Internet kit. Supra Simple Internet makes getting on the Internet easy with a 28.8 Kbps modem, Supra Mosaic software, customized manuals, a CD-ROM tutorial, fax software and all cables.



SupraExpress 288i PnP

This economical solution offers dependable 28.8 Kbps communications and the ease of plug-and-play installation. Configuration is automatic whether you're running Windows® 3.1 or Windows 95. Complete Windows solution for fax, Internet and file transfer.

For more information on communications contact Supra at http://www.supra.com/sonic-cgw

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Duking It Out

3D Realms Heats Up The Fight For Action Game King With DUKE NUKEM 3D And Three Other New Games

by Ken Brown

Warning: This article contains mature subject matter and language.

For 40 years, the Corvette was the unchallenged king of American sports cars. There were the "Goats" and the Hemis, the Mustang and the Zs, but these brutes couldn't match the Corvette's combination of speed, handling and sinuous good looks. The Dodge Viper is the first serious contender to the Corvette's throne, cranking up the competition for premier American power trip into a real two-way battle.

But what took 40 years in the auto world only takes three on the PC. DOOM's reign over 3D-style action games has suddenly been challenged by a urinal-kicking badass named Duke Nukem. Duke plays the star role in 3D Realms' new action game which has created a big stir on the Internet in shareware version with its richly detailed environment, challenging gameplay and controversial content.

So, the battle for the hearts and synapses of action gamers has suddenly turned into a real heat. And since id Software is already a household word for gamers, we wanted to get a closer look at the upstarts, who not so long ago were merely considered "also-rans" in 3D gaming, but who now, among other things, drive Dodge Vipers.



COOL YOUR JETS The freeze ray gun on the space station (Episode 2) gives you a chance to stop an alien cold, and then shatter him with a single bullet.

ID'S IN THERE

If you've downloaded the shareware version of WOLFENSTEIN 3D, DOOM or DUKE NUKEM 3D, you know about "The Apogee Model." The founder of Apogee, Scott Miller, invented the idea of selling the later episodes of shareware in 1987, with a text-based adventure called the KINGDOM OF KROZ (Zork spelled backwards). It was a huge success, earning up to $2000 a week by 1990. At that point Miller decided to chuck his day job and become a game tycoon.

In his search for game programmers, he discovered a young designer/programmer named John Romero. Miller enjoyed Romero's monthly games for *Softdisk* magazine, so he sent fan mail to get the programmer's attention. The strategy backfired when Romero, after tacking up his fan mail, discovered a common return address. He fired off a heated letter suggesting proctological uses of the addressee's pen.

"So I wrote back," says Miller, "and said, "No no no, you've got it wrong, I want to distribute one of your games. And they were interested, but John [Romero] wanted some money up front. So I said, 'How much?' and he thought about it and said, 'Three thousand dollars.' So I said, 'Okay, you got a deal.' It was almost all the money I had—I only had $5,000 in the bank."

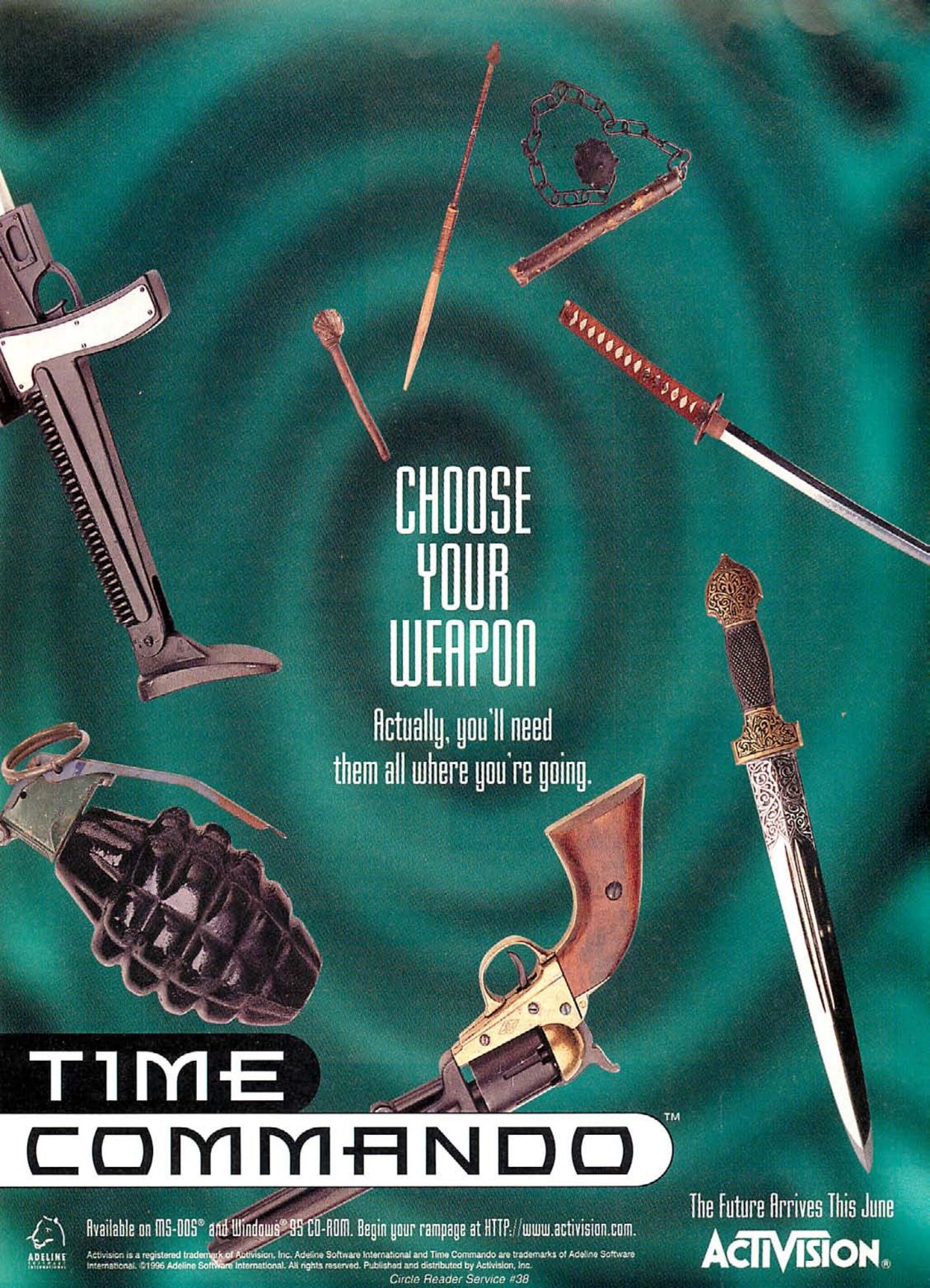
It was an exceptional investment. Romero and some friends wrote COMMANDER KEEN, which began raking in $1000 a day. Since the programmers' take was 40 percent, they decided to form a company: id Software.

In May of 1992, after two COMMANDER KEEN games, the young idlings (Romero, John Carmack, Tom Hall and Adrian Carmack) delivered WOLFENSTEIN 3D. WOLF's bloody, first-person action single-handedly propelled id and Apogee into the big leagues. It was, in the words of id's "Biz Guy," Jay Wilbur, "A hit the likes the shareware world on the PC had never seen before. Some people think that the shareware version of WOLF 3D was the most installed piece of software in the world, period. Even bigger than MS-DOS, because, back then, there were several versions of DOS."

Following the success of WOLFENSTEIN, id went on to develop DOOM and discontinued its partnership with Apogee. Miller and company suddenly found themselves without a game, a develop-



STEP ON IT, DUKE Those "alien bastards" don't look so bad shrunken down to size. And they make a great noise underfoot: Skrunch!



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Circle Reader Service #38

ment team or an engine, a predicament which Miller vows will never happen again. Scrambling, Apogee licensed the WOLFENSTEIN 3D engine from id and produced BLAKE STONE, which looked and played like a hasty WOLF knock-off. The seeds of Apogee's "copy cat" reputation were sprinkled upon BLAKE STONE's grave.

Then came DOOM. While id basked in the glory, Apogee released RISE OF THE TRIAD. ROTT, while not quite DOOM, had several aspects which elevated it above most DOOM-alikes. It could be played over network or modem, allowed flight, enabled destruction of various objects, and featured copious amounts of blood and gore. These and other features formed a prelude to DUKE NUKEM 3D, including flying body parts and large splotches of bloodied wall.

After ROTT, Miller and company intensified their efforts in 3D-style games by creating their 3D Realms division. Their first game was 1995's TERMINAL VELOCITY, a graphically appealing shooting star which burned up soon after entering earth's atmosphere. Despite its later release as Microsoft's FURY3, TV did little to dispel the notion that Apogee's games still weren't "A" caliber.



I'M GONNA PULVERIZE 'IM This alien boss is about to go down under a salvo of rocket grenades, courtesy of the Pulverizer.

DUKE KICKS DOWN THE DOOR

Then, DUKE NUKEM came to town. Begun in late '94, DUKE uses a powerful game creation tool called the Build engine (see Paul Schuytema's column on page 103). It also owes some of its design and detail to id's former Tom Hall. In the rich detail and high level of interactivity of DUKE 3D, players not only run and fly, but swim. Bullets leave pock marks on walls, blood can be tracked in footsteps, and large buildings can be brought crashing to the ground. (This effect even seemed to take id's John Romero by surprise. According to Miller, when Romero saw it he was stunned, saying only, "Oh shit, that's cool.") It's all a real treat in 640x480 or 800x600.

In addition, the character of Duke has a distinctive attitude, thanks to audio clips triggered throughout the game. Grabbing a shotgun, Duke says, "Groovy." Picking up the rocket launcher, "Who wants some?" Vaporize three pig-faced LAPD guards with a well-placed RPG, and Duke blurts, "Holy shit!"

In addition to an occasional expletive, Apogee decided to introduce more mature content into a computer game. So, the nightclub scene in the shareware version has dancing strippers expose their breasts. Though Duke's ability to shoot them sustains the game's atmosphere, it is sure to remain controversial.

There is even more sexual content in Episodes 2 and 3. Women have been abducted for use as *Aliens*-style hosts and are found tied and dangling in positions suggestive of erotic bondage. It's enough to make you wonder who they made this game for—adults?

"We got tired of making games for 12-year-olds," explains Apogee's pres-

Shadow Warrior

Modern day ninjas will be able to kick some tail in SHADOW WARRIOR. Although this game doesn't seem as well developed as BLOOD, 3D Realms' George Broussard says that the enemies will have the smartest AI of any game using the Build Engine (which, so far, isn't saying much). The playing mechanics will be slightly different, but you'll still have a variety of weapons to chose from. The most interesting are probably the Chinese throwing stars (shirikens), and a nasty napalm spell made by holding the severed head of a victim.

Expect the shareware version sometime around August.





Blood

3D Realms upcoming BLOOD is a kind of Dawn of the Dead in the 18th century. It seems that animal blood has been contaminated, turning once docile creatures into mutant zombies. Since every creature is deadly, you'll be rewarded for killing as many of them as possible. Weapons include sticks of dynamite, pitch forks, aerosol spray cans, flare guns and, my favorite, the voodoo doll—stick a pin in that puppy, and just watch the baddies squirm.

BLOOD will rise sometime later this year.







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ident Miller. "When I go see a movie, most of the movies I'm interested in are R rated. I don't want to see a PG-rated movie, so why should we make PG-rated games?"

What's interesting is that sexual imagery is a recent addition in Duke's development. The game was in development over a year before the company got the idea. Level designer Richard Gray proposed adding a topless woman somewhere in the game. The team liked the concept enough to "flesh it out." "We asked ourselves: 'How can we get sexual content into this game?'" says 3D Realms president George Broussard. Broussard and Miller say the response to DUKE's sexual content has been so overwhelming, they're even considering an X-rated commercial version. Miller quickly adds, "We don't care if Walmart bans it. Other places will carry it, and we'll say 'Banned In Walmart' right on the ads."

Prey

This is the game that 3D Realms claims will "do to QUAKE what DUKE NUKEM 3D did to DOOM." Strong stuff, but at this point it's difficult to tell if PREY is up to the challenge. The game's engine allows for a true 3D environment and texture-mapped polygonal characters (sound familiar?). Special lighting effects allow soft edges and additive illumination, but much of the art and gameplay mechanics have yet to be implemented.

PREY will offer an innovative multi-player option. In addition to modem and network play, 3D Realms says you'll be able to play it on the Internet. Upon exiting a level in multi-player, you can advance to a virtual environment located on a Web server, where your character can hang out with other players, stock up on health or weapons, even discuss strategies. When you're through, pick the portal you'd like to go to next. Designer Tom Hall believes that PREY "will do what the other services have really failed to do—provide a real online virtual community."



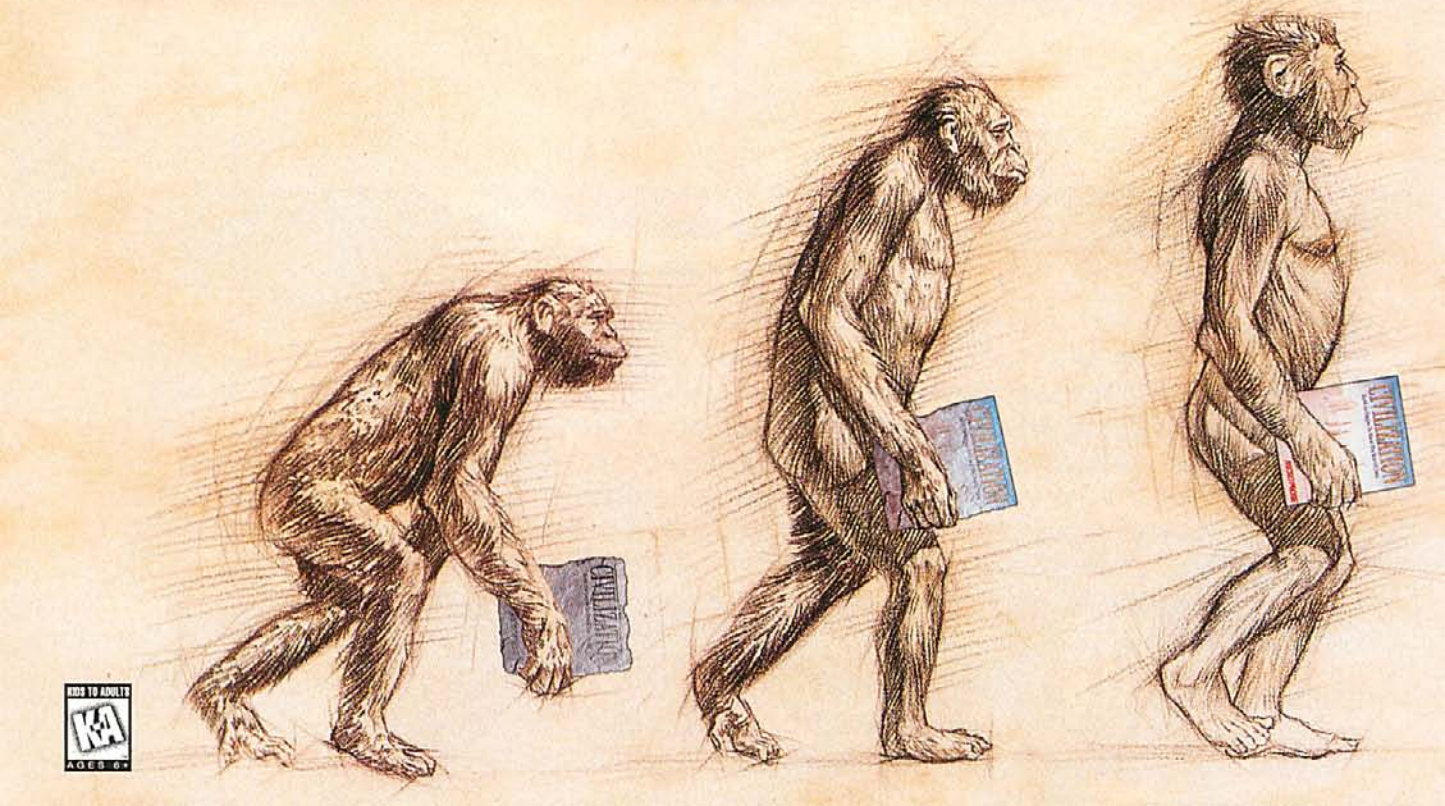


GONNA RIP 'EM A NEW ONE

Of course, the real charm in any networkable action game is a healthy arsenal with which to dismember friends. In addition to the 9mm semi-automatic, double-barreled shotgun, chaingun cannon, and rocket-propelled grenade launcher, there are pipe bombs which can be thrown and detonated by remote control. Shareware players already know how fun it is to drop a pipe bomb near a "Holoduke" decoy and set the thing off when an opponent draws near.

Four new weapons appear in the registered version. After blasting off in the last

THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATION



KIDS TO ADULTS
AGES 6+



BOOBY TRAPPED Trip mines can be placed high or low on the walls, and they detonate when their beam is broken. You'd use trip mines, too, if Earthwomen were abducted as breeders.

level of the shareware version, Duke finds himself on a spaceship orbiting Earth. The aliens on the ship are packing chain-gun cannons, so it will take some new goodies to waste 'em. The shrink ray weapon casts a potent orb that reduces enemies to an ideal size for crushing underfoot. The freeze ray immobilizes enemies long enough to squeeze off a bullet or kick them, shattering the aliens in a glittering T2-style display. For more traditional fare, the Pulverizer fires exploding rockets, and trip mines can be stuck on walls to detonate whenever their beams are broken.

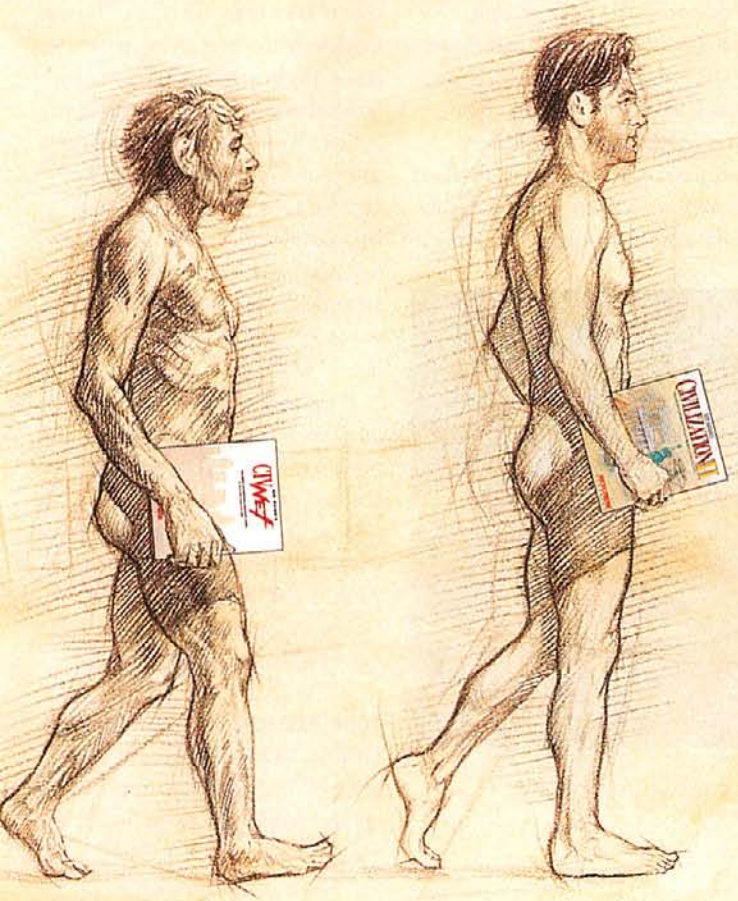
IS TEXAS BIG ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF THEM?

DUKE's rise to glory has led a lot of people to speculate about a rivalry between Apogee/3D Realms and id. Some cite the DOOM marine's severed torso in DUKE NUKEM as evidence that 3D Realms is out for blood. There are even heated messages on the Internet with headers like "id Is In Fear Of DUKE NUKEM."

Sources at both companies insist there is no enmity. Then they'll proceed to tell you how much better they are than the other. Says 3D Realms president George Broussard, "There's no rivalry between us. We think id's great, as long as they understand their place."

Id doesn't seem too concerned. Biz guy Wilbur comments, "Imitation is a serious form of flattery. We've flattered each other often through the years. DUKE seems pretty cool, but we tend to set the mark not just for Apogee, but for the industry. We're generally a couple of years out in front of everyone."

Will the Corvette fall to the the Viper challenge? We'll have to see. In the meantime, the guys at id don't seem to be concerned. They're driving Ferraris.



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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Road Kill

Duel To The Death In A Crazed Cabbie's Dream Come True

by Mark Clarkson



THIS AIN'T THE BATMOBILE Comic book-style artwork frames the ROADWARRIOR action and helps advance the story.

For years, your only dream was to get the hell out of Kemo City, the giant, brutal metropolis-turned-prison maintained by the faceless Omnicorp. You were a cabbie, driving a hovercab, and in between your job and sleepless nights in the backseat, you'd managed to run down more than your fair share of crazed psychos, gun-totting lunatics, and "innocent" pedestrians. It made you a perfect recruit when a member of the guerilla underground came looking for a hitman to take down the Omnicorp. It was a crazy idea, but, hey, the Omnicorp started the craziness when they began pumping the city's water supply full of psychosis-inducing hydrogene, right?

In no time at all, you'd smashed the administration center, killed all the scientists, blown up the hydrogene factory and the TV station, and with the right combination of guts, guns and secret passwords, finally escaped from Kemo City...only to find nothing beyond the city walls but sand, sand, and more sand. Blinded and parched, you crash your hovercab into a boulder and are soon found by a band of bandy-toothed mutant thugs who want you to participate in something violently dubbed the Killduel. Seems you've only escaped from the frying pan into the fire.

WELCOME BACK

ROAD WARRIOR is a new first-person shooter from Gametek, the sequel to last year's violently daffy QUARANTINE. Think of it as DOOM from a car. Once again, you are Drake Edgewater, mercenary cabbie, and you see the world from behind the wheel of your Checker hovercab. If QUARANTINE was trying to evoke the look and feel of *Escape from New York*, then ROAD WARRIOR is trying to evoke the look and feel of...well, *The Road Warrior*. You're a lone, macho dude, cruising through a post-apocalyptic desert in a hot car.

Although your ride is a taxi, it's armed to the teeth. When the bad guys get in your way, you can hose them down with hot lead from your roof-mounted chain gun, or chuck exploding "Blackjack" mines at them out the back end. It sometimes helps to crash into your victims once or twice to disorient them. That way they'll hold still longer, giving you time to aim and let loose a few missiles, or a few hundred rounds of armor-piercing ammo.

ROAD WARRIOR's plot is advanced with a nicely done comic book which rolls between levels. After you finish off one level, you charge across the desert, dodging tanks, missile-spewing dune buggies, falling rocks and tumbleweeds on your way to the next city, town, airport or rebel base.

Things are bad all over and it won't surprise you one bit to find that Omnicorp is behind most of it. Even in the verdant Mutton Valley, things are amiss. Here, the roads are clogged with giant squash, mutant crack-smoking pigs run amuck in the fields, and babies are being born with two rows of teeth and arms growing right out of their backs.

YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT

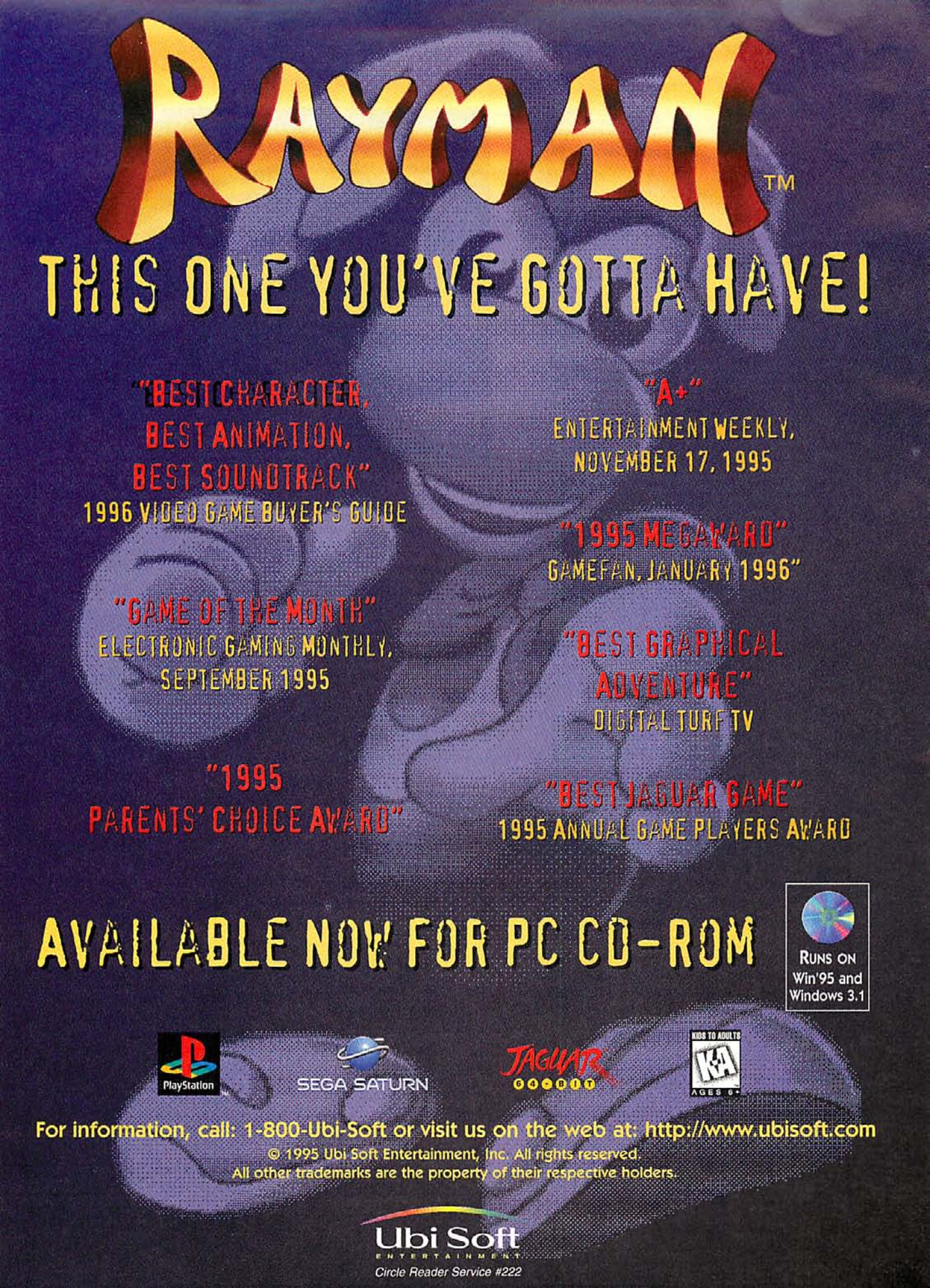
ROAD WARRIOR is much more mission-oriented than its predecessor. In



Price: $39.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486-33 or better, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards
of players: 1
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Rod Humbel
Publisher: Gametek
Aventura, FL
(800) GAMETEK
Reader Service #: 325



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ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY, NOVEMBER 17, 1995
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QUARANTINE, you spent the majority of your time and energy taxiing passengers from location to location, collecting fares so you could pay for repairs, weapons and ammo.

In ROAD WARRIOR, performing missions for the underground is pretty much all you do. You'll track down and kill lawyers, blow up trains, run over joggers, shoot down crop dusters, put out fires with water balloons, and herd mutant pigs back into their pens.

Your missions usually operate under a time constraint. If you take too long to complete the objective, you fail and are doomed to repeat that mission again and again until you finally get it right. As you tick off missions, you'll progress through Omnicorp-controlled cities, rebel bases, a twisted Disneyland knock-off (home of Stickey Mouse) and, eventually, back to Kemo City.

WHAT'S NEW, MUTANT CAT

In QUARANTINE, you chose and purchased your own weaponry out of your hard-earned fare money, and it was your responsibility to keep it full of ammo. By contrast, you begin each mission in ROAD WARRIOR fully repaired and automatically equipped with whatever weaponry is deemed necessary to complete the objective. One mission you've got missiles and torpedoes, and the next you've got nothing but retractable spikes on the front bumper or a gun that shoots water-filled condoms.



THIS RULES "Hey Beavis, watch me blow the doors of that big stupid truck." "Yeah yeah, that driver's a wuss! I bet he doesn't, like, have a penis. Huh huh."

In QUARANTINE, there was a grid of power broadcast posts and if you left the grid, your batteries began to run down. In ROAD WARRIOR, energy is not a consideration. You start every mission with your battery fully charged, and it never drains, no matter where you drive.

In addition to the view through your four windows, ROAD WARRIOR allows you to see things from your enemy's point of view, as well as from above and behind your cab. The latter comes in especially handy when your view is blocked by the giant mutant pig impaled on your bumper spikes (don't ask.)

The graphics are improved from QUARANTINE, offering a wide-aspect ratio SVGA mode, and the music is still a cut above average, featuring an eclectic mix of punk rock and hillbilly swing. But, despite being quite explicit in some ways, ROAD WARRIOR isn't big on realism. It doesn't feel very much like you're driving a vehicle (although, I can't say I know what driving a hovercab feels like).

The levels feel really big, but the environment isn't very interactive: glass doesn't shatter, exploding vehicles leave no debris, and so forth. You can blow through trees like so many puffs of smoke, but bounce off of a tent. Most fences will stop you as dead as a concrete wall, while you can run through others with nary a bump or scratch. For some unexplained reason, every pedestrian on the receiving end of your punishment looks like they're wearing a softball uniform, whether you're running them over in the alley ways of Flagg City or impaling them on your bumper spikes in the cornfields of Mutton County.

GameTek took many of my favorite elements—looking for fares, managing money, deciding what weapons load to take—out of the game. Also, you can no longer change tracks on the CD, or plug in your own music CD and jam to Nine Inch Nails while running down giant mutant pigs. Still, if you liked QUARANTINE, you'll probably get a kick out of ROAD WARRIOR. Like its predecessor, ROAD WARRIOR is juvenile, low-brow and wacky, chock full of blood, severed limbs and toilet humor. But how can you not like a game that includes cow tipping?

APPEAL: Anyone who likes QUARANTINE and BEAVIS & BUTTHEAD.

PROS: This game will make you laugh with its juvenile humor, and it boasts really big, detailed levels.

CONS: The humor is profane, and many of QUARANTINE's finer elements—those that made you think about weapons and money management—are gone.

CG RATED

Getting About

The secret to getting about quickly in ROAD WARRIOR is to regard roads as "suggestions" rather than imperatives. Roaring through the undergrowth doesn't slow you down anywhere near as badly as it did in QUARANTINE. If you don't run into a wall or fence or building, you can rock along off-road about as quickly as you can on the road...and there's a lot less traffic. With the power grid eliminated, you no longer have to worry about running your batteries down every time you take to the fields.

This strategy isn't perfect; if you get too far off the beaten path, you can find yourself trapped in a box canyon, or between solid rows of buildings. Still, in general, you'll make better time and can complete the between-level runs through the desert with virtually no combat or damage. To prevent getting lost, try driving directly adjacent to the road: on the sidewalk, shoulder, or what have you. When you *are* driving on the road, resist the temptation to go too quickly. Otherwise, you'll waste a lot of time by missing turns and slamming into buildings.



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Circle Reader Service #43

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Paddle To Paddle

HYPER 3-D PINBALL Racks Up A High Score, While PINBALL WORLD Goes Down The Chute

by Arinn Dembo

You may have noticed a flood of new pinball computer games. Digital pinball is becoming more interesting and more refined, developing into a peculiar little sub-genre of its own. Buy any recent title and you can try new innovations such as campaign games, strategy elements, event animations, warping from table to table, and all sorts of other stuff, most of which isn't possible on real pinball machines.

The primary audience for digital pinball are people who love the machines of old. These fans have certain standards which are rarely met by computerized simulations. Even in the best pinball games, there's usually something that keeps the experience from being less than perfect: you can't jolt or "crunch" the table, or control the launch of the ball, and the control keys are often awkward. Suffice it to say that the search for the perfect pinball game continues.

Two new contenders, each trying to pull the proverbial sword from the stone, are: HYPER 3D PINBALL, by Virgin Interactive, and PINBALL WORLD, by Spidersoft and released by 21st Century Entertainment. Other than the word "pinball" in the title, these two games have nothing in common, yet both have something to offer digital wizards.



JUNGLE FEVER PINBALL WORLD breaks the rules of pinball design, but the environment isn't very rich in targets or excitement.

PINBALL WORLD: VOLUME, VOLUME, VOLUME

First, let's talk quantity. PINBALL WORLD is a "low-rent" pinball that touts its world travel motif. The player warps through tables with themes like United Kingdom, Germany, Hollywood, etc. It has lots of gameplay, with nine main tables, another 10-plus bonus tables, and five or six sub-games connecting the tables. For example, the Hollywood table has a Las Vegas bonus table attached, and there's a "Baja roadrace" subgame that gets you from the Hollywood table to the South America table below it.



ON TOUR Players advance through PINBALL WORLD by traveling through places like the UK, Germany and Hollywood.



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: PC 386-33, 40 MHz, DOS 5.0 or higher, 55K free conventional memory, 4 MB EMS, CD-ROM drive, 512K VGA card; supports most major sound cards.
of Players: 1
Protection: (CD must be in drive)
Designer: SpiderSoft
Publisher: 21 Century Entertainment, Inc. Webster, NY 14580 (716) 872-1200
Reader Service #: 326

Is there a problem here? Well, yes and no; it really depends on what you want. The tables in PINBALL WORLD, although plentiful, are not satisfying to an experienced pinball player. The arrangement of paddles and drains is unconventional, which could be a plus, except the environment isn't very rich in targets or excitement. There's not much need for advanced pinball skills like catches, passing or aimed shots, and saving the ball is simple, while losing it is depressingly anticlimactic. A lost ball goes into a "ball trap" that automatically kicks the ball back into play. The ball traps have a limited number of saves, so you don't actually "lose" a ball until the trap is down to zero.

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CYBERIA^2™ <<RESURRECTION>>

Circle Reader Service #299

APPEAL: Casual action gamers who don't care about traditional pinball design.

PROS: Lots of tables and gameplay

CONS: Primitive graphics, cranky program, low excitement level. People who love the real thing probably won't enjoy this game.

CG RATED

see in a pinball simulation—full-table view; jolting the table in two or three directions; controlling the ball launch; a good mix of targets; and multiball play—are not here. Forget about controlled launch; in PINBALL WORLD you don't *get* to launch the ball. It just appears in the middle of the table and starts falling. The screen scrolls around the tables, each of which has a maximum of 10 or 11 shots to make, not counting combinations. There's no multiball play, and you get only one key with which to jolt, then, ridiculously, the computer decides how to jolt the table.

Instead of the standard pleasures of real pinball, what you get are odd little bonus games, where you use an awkward interface to direct cars, boats, submarines or wagons through a maze in order to warp to another table. It's OK, but hardly compensates for what's missing.

I had some technical problems with PINBALL WORLD. The game was too cranky to run with the older of my two SVGA cards. And despite the implementation of the enclosed patch, the bottom half of the screen still flickered on my 486x66 machine with an older video card. The graphics are fairly primitive, but still serviceable. The sound and music are acceptable. The modeling of the ball isn't terrible, but I've seen better.

Although PINBALL WORLD gives you 20 tables, while more extravagant pinball games usually offer only four or five, in overall appearance this game just can't compete with the more sophisticated titles. So, unless you've exhausted the other options, you might want to pass on it.

CG CHOICE



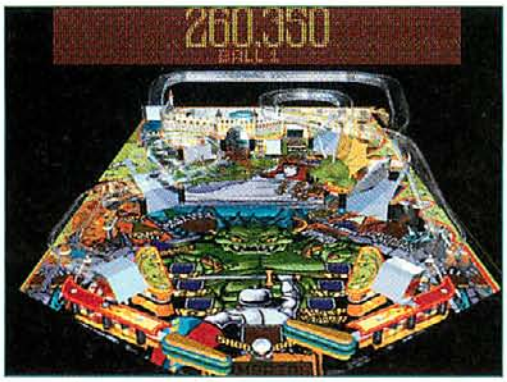
Price: $39.99
System Requirements: 486DX-33, 8 MB RAM, 3 MB hard disk space, SVGA video card with 1 MB RAM, DOS 5.0 or higher, 2x CD-ROM drive, MSCDEX 2.2 or higher, sound card with FM and PCM sound, launchable from Win 95.
of Players: 1 to 4
Protection: (CD must be in drive)
Designer: NMS Software, LTD.
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment 18061 Fitch Avenue Irvine, CA 92714-9841 (800) 874-4607, (714) 833-8710
Reader Service #: 327

HYPER 3D PINBALL: THE CREAM OF THE CROP

Did I say that the search for the perfect pinball simulator was still going? I lied. It's loaded onto my hard drive now, where it will probably remain. Of course, it's too early to say that no one could do better, but to this point, HYPER 3-D PINBALL is the best pinball simulator I've seen.

I'd like to find fault with this game, but I can't. HYPER 3-D PINBALL has six beautiful tables, totaling 50 percent more gameplay than most other pinball simulators. The tables are not only beautiful, they are target-rich, with an excellent selection of challenges, skill shots, loops and ramps, drop holes, bumpers and rollover targets. And the table themes are very cool: Frankenstein's Monster, Roadking USA, Gangster, and exceptional sci-fi, sword n' sorcery and circus themes. You get multiball and 3-D event animations when locking the ball and making various shots. All very cool stuff that also is nicely unobtrusive, since the game is smart enough not to run them every time you make a shot—after the first time, play goes on uninterrupted.

The greatest thing about this game, is its versatility and freedom. You can control

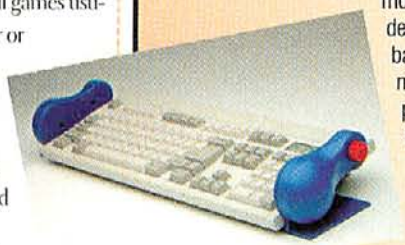


YOU'VE GOT THE LOOK HYPER 3-D PINBALL is as realistic as virtual gets, and the table themes are tres cool.

ThrustMaster's Pinball Wizzard

What? You say you're playing pinball with two shift keys and the spacebar to control the action? Say no more! ThrustMaster has developed a controller that simulates the position of the paddle buttons, and allows you to slap, shake and otherwise molest the table to your advantage.

The ThrustMaster Wizzard controller has two pear-shaped widgets, that are fitted on either side of your keyboard. The narrow end of the widget is the paddle control button; the larger end is a motion sensor that detects forward-and-back and side-to-side motion, allowing the player to shake and tilt the virtual table. The controller attaches to the 15-pin game port of any computer.



However, I had some trouble with the calibration program. The paddle buttons worked fine, and three of the four directional sensors were responsive, but the side-to-side motion on the right paddle was consistantly unresponsive. Thrustmaster would have been wise to give players the option of setting the paddles to control only the flippers or the tilt mechanism, and save only the axis of motion it could consistantly detect.

I was unable to use the controller with its included game, although I greatly admired the table. It is a perfect simulation of the old Gottlieb & Co. *Royal Flush* machine, a beautiful table that must be well over 20 years old. However, I had no trouble using the controller with HYPER 3-D PINBALL game which has its own calibration program. The flippers and tilt mechanism worked like a charm, and I even lost the ball a couple of times. *ThrustMaster Wizzard Pinball Controller*, $39.95; (503) 639-3200

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A GRAVEYARD SMASH A monster of a machine, this table sports trains, a guillotine and cat screams.

the game with the keyboard or use the new ThrustMaster Wizzard Controllers for paddles (the game has its own calibration sub-routine for the paddles, making installation simple). You get three keys with which to jolt, you control the launch of the ball, and you have certain available skill shots on all six tables. I personally dislike scrolling screens in pinball simulators, but some players may prefer it; and just in case they do, HYPER 3-D PINBALL offers three views of the table. There's a 3-D scrolling playfield, a 2-D planview, or my favorite, the 3-D full-screen view, which displays the whole table while still providing some 3-D effects on the ramps. You can easily adjust sound, music, and the contrast of the graphics. And you can play with 1-4 players. Who could ask for more?

Well, if you're a really ungrateful sod, you could also ask for a complete and informative manual for the game—and you'd get one. Complete with a step-by-step discussion of the targets and challenges on each table, the manual also provides some tips for improving your game. If you know your pinball tables and you're looking for a simulator that isn't a disappointment, HYPER 3-D PINBALL is a good bet.

There is one possible down-side. HYPER 3-D PINBALL does not really transcend the capabilities of a genuine pinball machine, nor does it incorporate elements of strategy or table-warping, both of which are nice features that I've enjoyed in other games. The otherwise cool animations, are really just window dressing for standard shot-making and challenges. It's very well done, but it's still pinball, with no other goal than racking up the highest possible score before you lose your last ball. If you need more than that, then even the cream of the crop probably won't do.

APPEAL: Real pinball players, arcade game fans and anybody who appreciates a highly polished action game on the PC.

PROS: Everything is done right; this is the best pinball simulator on the market.

CONS: No table-warping, sub-games or strategy elements. This is for the pinball purist.

CG RATED



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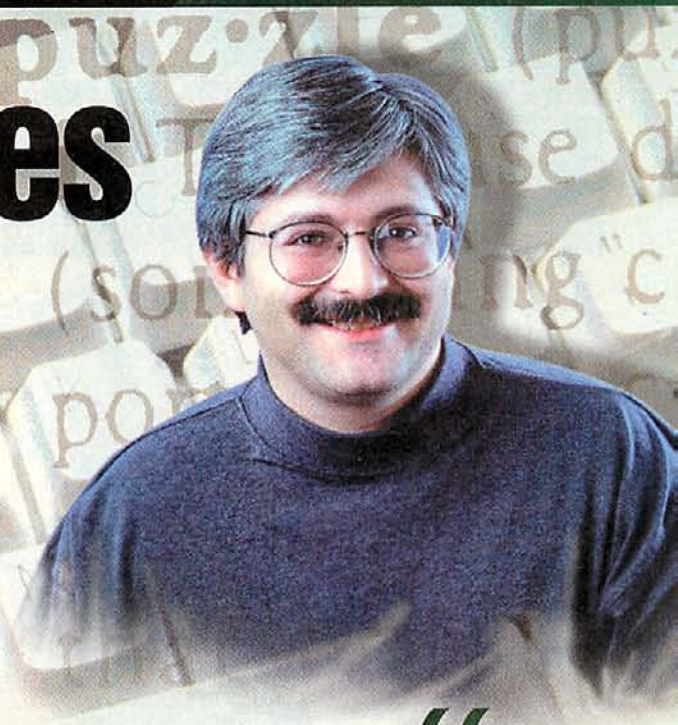
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Chess Moves

Maurice Ashley Opens Up The Game Of Kings, While Virtual Chess Slams The Door Shut



Chess is an odd game. It has no luck, other than perhaps your opponent missing an obvious move. It isn't really a sport, but Bobby Fischer used to train for big matches at Crossinger's, the same gym Ali used to prepare for heavyweight bouts. Chess has been called the ultimate tactical game, yet it has strategies so subtle that a human can still beat a computer calculating billions of potential moves ahead. Chess is somewhat of an art form, a symphony, even a religion. What it has rarely been is entertaining. With the exception of the Fischer-Spassky and Kasparov-Karpov matches, most people couldn't name two world-class chess masters if they ran into them on the street.

CHESS MADE EASY

Things might be changing, however. The best teaching tool for chess has always been the CHESSMASTER series from Mindscape, with its powerful stable of opponents and chess problems. BOBBY FISCHER TEACHES CHESS gets brownie points for bringing a sense of fun to the party, but its chess engine is really pretty weak. Neither of these programs, good as they are, can really prepare you for MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS.

Maurice Ashley is not only the first African-American International chess master, he is also a fabulous coach, whose two teams win top honors constantly in the National Junior High Team Chess Championship. Having lost in the state team finals twice, trust me: it's a tremendous achievement to get there, much less win the nationals year after year.

Ashley inspires his charges to treat chess like any other sports competition, complete with slam dunks. The CD treats you to the master's style of coaching with video, audio and chess diagrams interspersed with animated illustrations of technique. These aren't just the typical "Rook to G-7" moves, either. Pawns become Ninja Assassins, while Rooks on open files are depicted as charging rhinos. To promote a Pawn to a Queen, you are instructed to move supporting pieces to cover the 8th rank, like a lineman in football blocking for a running back—it's the first time I've ever heard "touchdown" when playing chess.

> "The top level of ASHLEY is more than competitive enough for the average chess player."

From the basics of how to move pieces to the subtleties of weak squares and the sharp tactics of sacrificing pieces for checkmate, MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS has all the answers. The quick drill format even works as a refresher course for intermediate players, and the whole process is invariably enjoyable as well as informative. And while the chess engine will never challenge CHESSMASTER, the top level of ASHLEY is more than competitive enough for the average chess player. If you want to turn a friend on to chess, or start learning how to do more than just push pieces yourself, this is the best program you can buy. *MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS, Davidson/Simon & Schuster, 800-457-8357.*

CHESS MADE UNNECESSARILY DIFFICULT

When VIRTUAL CHESS scored the best of any program at a recent event against human Grandmasters, I figured it would jump like a Knight to the top of the heap. Problem is, we don't have a new chess engine here—we got VIRTUACHESS Plus instead. I'm no Grandmaster, but I still get more of a challenge out of CHESSMASTER 4000 than VIRTUAL CHESS, especially on

CHECK!

- According to Mindscape, CHESSMASTER 5000 will be able to import and analyze data from BOOKUP (see above), making it a much more attractive product for serious chess-meisters.
- CHESS MENTOR from Aficianado, Inc. has a lot of chess talent behind it, including four International Masters and the designer of Kasparov's Gambit, Ralph Nagel. It tries to be so non-threatening, however, that it misses the point: any chess teaching program, no matter how good, can only benefit by letting you use what you've learned against the computer. Having a chess teaching program without an AI is like teaching moves in the low post without ever playing a basketball game. Chess may aspire to be art, but it's still about competition.

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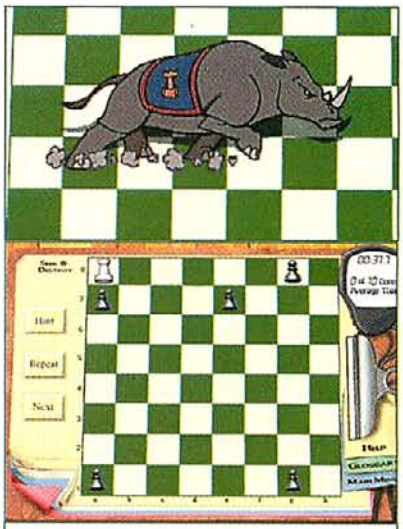
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TERRY COLEMAN

medium levels. When you toss in the great variety of simulated opponents, CHESSMASTER is a far more robust chess program.

What's worse, the tutorials of VIRTUAL CHESS are boring in the extreme. KASPAROV'S GAMBIT, released three years ago, did a better job with multimedia, not to mention rating your overall play. Let's be honest here: almost any top chess program can beat 90 percent of the chess players in the U.S. 90 percent of the time when set to the highest AI levels. When you put programs like VIRTUAL CHESS on a mainframe, they can even be competitive with Masters. That doesn't make them the best program for the average chess player. If Titus and I-Motion want to put some effort into making the program more accessible, from the tutorials to the types of simulated opponents and even the graphics and interface, then they might have a winner. In the meantime, buy MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS and wait for CHESSMASTER 5000 to finally release. *VIRTUAL CHESS, I-Motion, 800-443-3386.*



ROOK RHINO RAMPAGE Clever animation and hip commentary make the "Seek & Destroy" challenges of MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS a better teaching tool.

WHAT THE PROS PLAY

Is the Sicilian Defense too tame for your chess repertoire? Do you lie awake nights in fear of new developments in the Grob opening? If so, BOOKUP is your Holy Grail. This small company out of Columbus Ohio has the most comprehensive, up-to-date software for the serious chess player—entire chess books by prominent International Masters and writers are available on disk. Unlike other game databases such as *ChessBase*, BOOKUP stores chess positions in an "analysis tree" containing anything relevant to the position you are studying, whether it's from a grandmaster tournament, or your weekly game at the local Chess club. In addition, you can load these positions into several chess programs, such as ZARKOV, and the program will analyze the position beyond the moves you've input.

This is a product for serious chess players, but it is easy to use, and the analysis sheets can be printed in a format similar to that of the *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*. Available on Mac, IBM, and Windows, BOOKUP is still the cream of the chess crop, with prices ranging from $99 to $179; books on disk are $29 each. *BOOKUP, 800-949-5445.*

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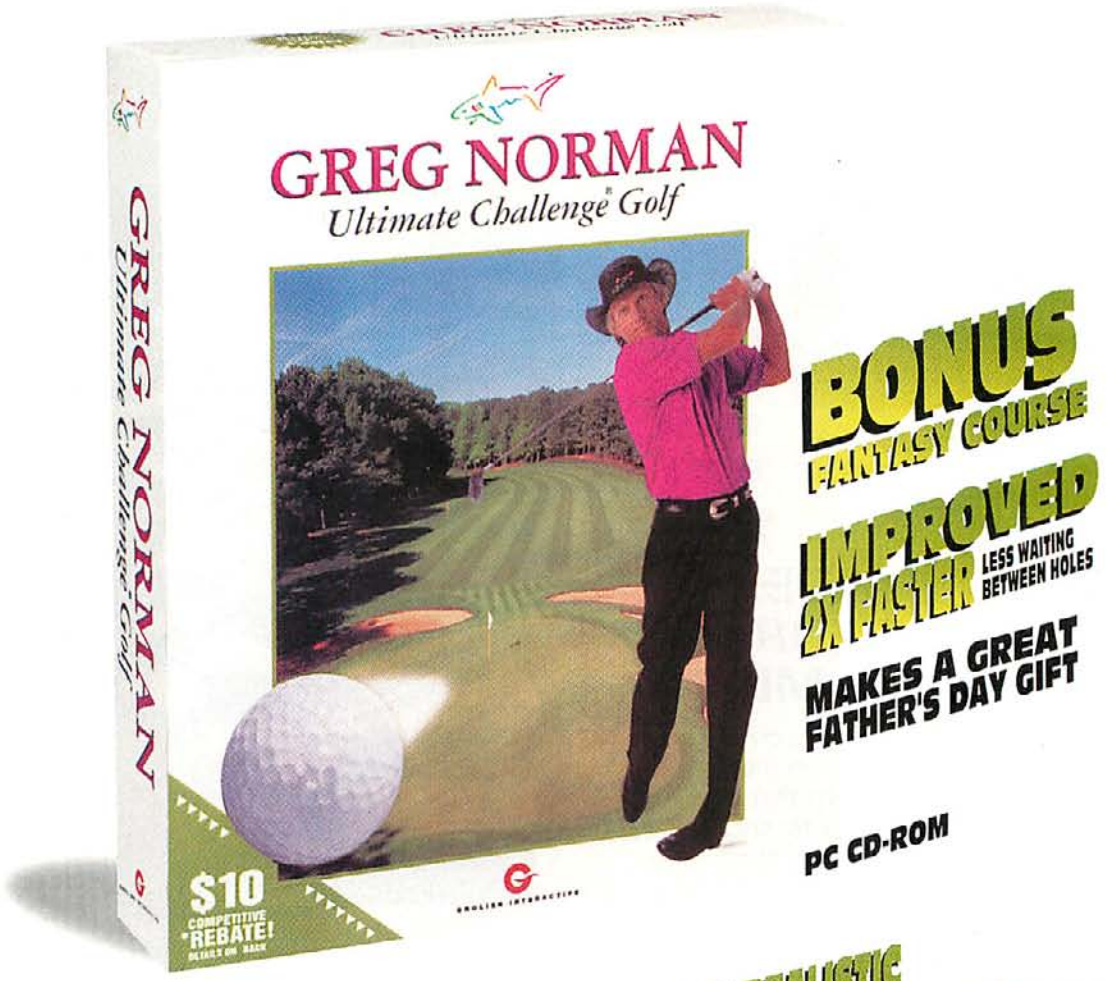
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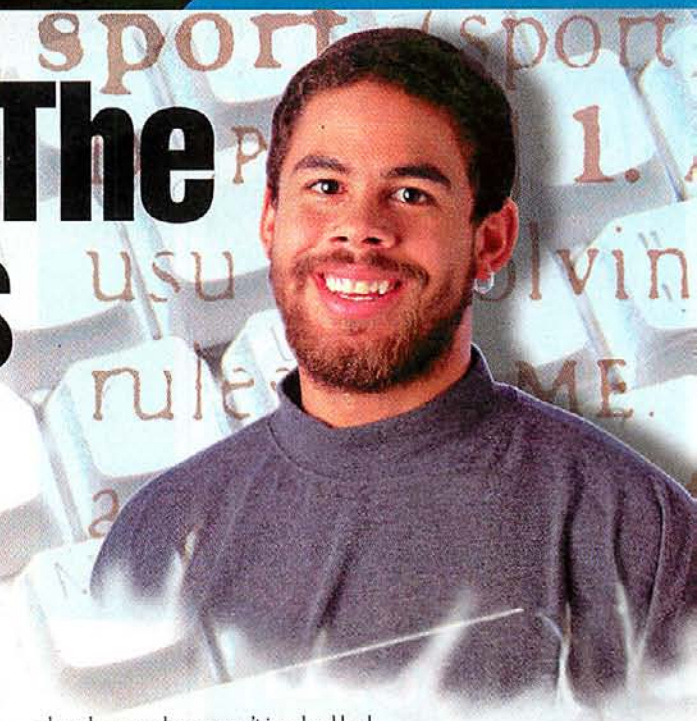


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Pondering The Intangibles

Adding Realism To Computer Sports Games



One thing constantly burns me out about computer sports games: their lack of depth. I know that sounds a little weird—how much deeper can you get (or do you want to get) in a game that features a full season replay with player personnel decisions, et cetera? My problem is that very few sports titles have taken the genre much farther. The FRONT PAGE SPORTS titles and TONY LA RUSSA 3 are the only games I can think of where the challenge has greater scope than merely trying to win the season title. Maybe designers are afraid that if they inject a game with too much replay value, sales will go the way of Major League Baseball Attendance. Or maybe it's just too much effort. But imagine an NCAA college basketball game where you have to recruit players, deal with their myriad off-the-court problems, and possibly, even face an NCAA investigation. What would happen to your computerized pro basketball team if, in addition to calculating statistics and ratings, you had to deal with intangibles such as how salary negotiations or suspensions over failing to stand for the national anthem could affect a given player's performance. It could be fascinating!

SPEAKING OF FRONT PAGE SPORTS

Here's one great wish that FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL 96, when (and if) it ships in July, delivers on its exceptional potential. One thing's for sure: the time it takes to play games within the season where human players aren't involved had better take a lot less time than they did in FPSB 94, or even in FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL 96 for that matter.

WHERE THE ACTION IS

I hope JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL '96 from Electronic Arts will also find a new level in sports play. I haven't seen a quality action-oriented football title yet on the PC, but MADDEN could fill the bill. While some may legitimately argue that playing JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL isn't playing real football (the quarterback has longer than three seconds to get off a pass and the defenses don't read plays as quickly as

> **"Imagine an NCAA basketball game where you have to recruit players, deal with their off-court problems, and even face an investigation."**

ON DECK

▸ Interactive Magic's DECATHLON is having trouble making the Olympic squad. The extra development time will be worth it, though, if it gives us the first good action-oriented track-and-field simulation since, oh, the days of the C-64.

▸ OverTime Sports, the joint venture between Spectrum HoloByte and ABC Sports, will be bringing out a version of ABC MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL with digitized versions of all the regular announcers. The 3-D football game will offer direct play connectivity and is expected to support league play on a major, but as yet unannounced, online service. By next year, the company hopes to add to their line with ABC CFA COLLEGE FOOTBALL, complete with Keith Jackson's announcing and 32 of the best college teams.



INVERSE LIMBO The Fosbury Flop never looked so good as in the SVGA of Interactive Magic's DECATHLON.

▸ IBM Publishing plans to continue their foray into sports publishing with PRO LEAGUE BASEBALL, a stat-based game which will support players from 1904-1995 in its database. IBM also plans a strange version of a classic sports game. They will also publish a game called PANDEMONIUM GOLF which is supposed to allow gamers to tee off in the middle of New York, New Orleans and other bizarre settings.

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Circle Reader Service #117

GEORGE JONES

the real players do), it's still a blast. Finally, it looks like there will be a football game on the PC where you can pick a hole to run through or actually complete a pass by clicking on a downfield receiver and letting the ball fly.

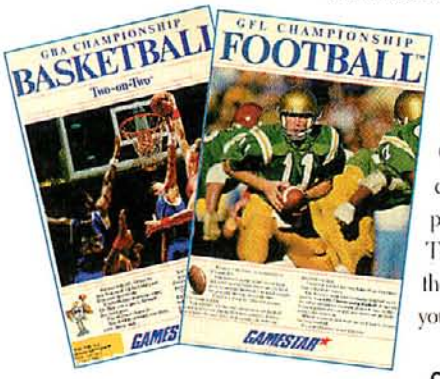
MULTIPLAYER MATCH-UPS

Besides the Imagination Network's version of FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL, where can gamers turn for multiplayer sports gaming? Uh, that would be Absolutely Nowhere, Alex. I swear, the first company to take a quality sports game on-line will clean up. I get weak thinking of playing basketball or baseball over an on-line service. I understand that latency is a problem, but the possibilities are incredible.

Soccer fans will get their chance with VR SPORTS SOCCER on the PC. Interplay's new sports division plans a network version of the soccer game that will let up to 20 players take control of one on-screen player (except the goalie). Players may have that sense of playing a team sport for the first time ever when that happens. Now, if someone would only do that for hockey.

DOOM MEETS HOCKEY

With the current emphasis on first person 3-D action, I'm surprised no sports designers have made a stab at DOOM-meets-hockey. The only first-person attempt at a sports game I can recall is a long-lost Commodore 64 game by Gamestar called GFL CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL with it's "in-the-helmet" view. Unfortunately, while it was kind of neat having to perfectly run wide receiver routes (seven steps forward, two steps left, turn to the ball), it was also more than a little frustrating.



MEMORY BANK Gamestar's sports games were always way ahead of their time. This football game had an "in the helmet" view.

Speaking of Gamestar, old-time gamers might remember their gem of a basketball title: GBA CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL...A two-on-two full court hoops game, this title had everything—three pointers, dunks, league play, statistics, you name it. The AI was way too easy, of course (what game back then had a good AI?), but talk about being ahead of your time.

GET A GRIP

I think that Gravis GrIP is great–playing games with four people at a time, each with their own multi-button gamepad is awesome. But while playing around with NHL 96 and NBA LIVE 96 with some friends, I noticed that the action got more than a little confusing at times. Gameplay, in both cases, became quizzical contests of "Who has the ball?...Who has the puck?...Why do you keep hogging the rock?" Here's why: in most sports games, when you pass the ball/puck, you immediately gain control of the recipient of your pass. The same is true of multiplayer NHL 96 and NBA Live. Therein lies the problem. Whenever I passed to another player, I expected my GrIP-enabled teammate to be given control of the new ball-handler. But that doesn't happen–if you don't pass to your teammate specifically (the other guy on the floor with a colored star around his feet), you just keep passing to yourself.

It's not the Gravis GrIP's fault. This is a game design flaw that is present in all EA Sports games. But it does indicate that before we plunge into the realm of multiplayer play, game designers are going to have to occasionally rethink gameplay. Maybe that's the real reason online sports games haven't happened yet.

Next Month: George Jones passes the baton to Dennis McCauley, his first pick in the draft as new sports columnist.

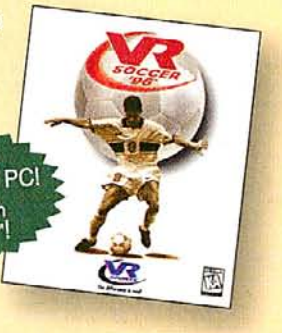
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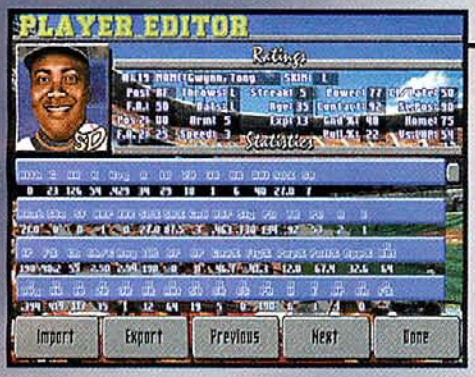
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New player animations are smoother and more detailed, letting you aim for the inside corner. "Zoom in" baserunner windows let you make your best pick-off move to the bag.



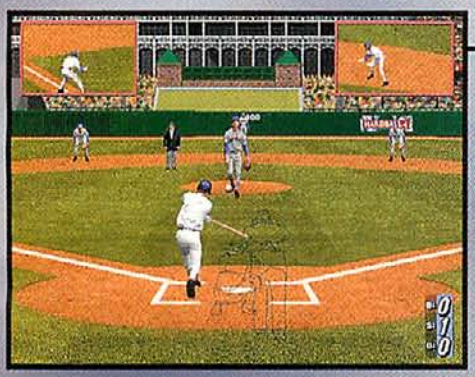
Watch your best reliever warming up in the bullpen, and analyze your starter's fatigue, pitch count, and performance. When he's ready to go, you're ready to go!



Create your own players from scratch, or modify any player's ratings, or even their physical attributes! The resulting player will be true-to-life, on-field and off.



Experience the best of baseball history with the bonus "Legends" League—12 great legendary teams from history, come to life in 12 beautifully rendered old-time stadiums.



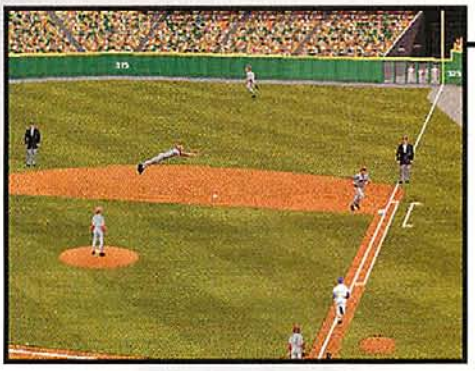
Optional wide-angle pitcher and batter views recreate the traditional look of a broadcast baseball game in beautiful 256-color SVGA graphics!



For maximum variety in gameplay, change any manager's tendencies on any team and see the results play out on the field and in the stats.



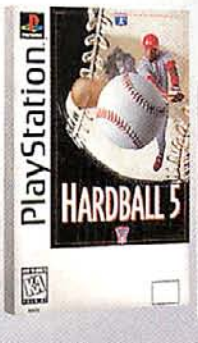
Hot new user interface gives you instant access to any feature. View and manage your team from the field, from the dugout, and from the General Manager's office!

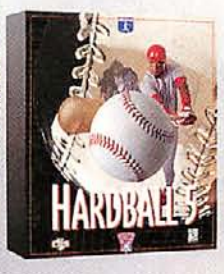


This "fifth generation" fielding simulation has additional play animations, baseball plays, and graphics realism, resulting in true-life baseball gameplay.



It's all here: pick-off plays, hit-and-run, suicide squeeze, towering pop-ups, and more. The ultimate simulation of baseball, for everyone who loves the game!





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PC CD-ROM
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Victory On Ice

A New Challenger Makes A Run For Computer Hockey's Cup

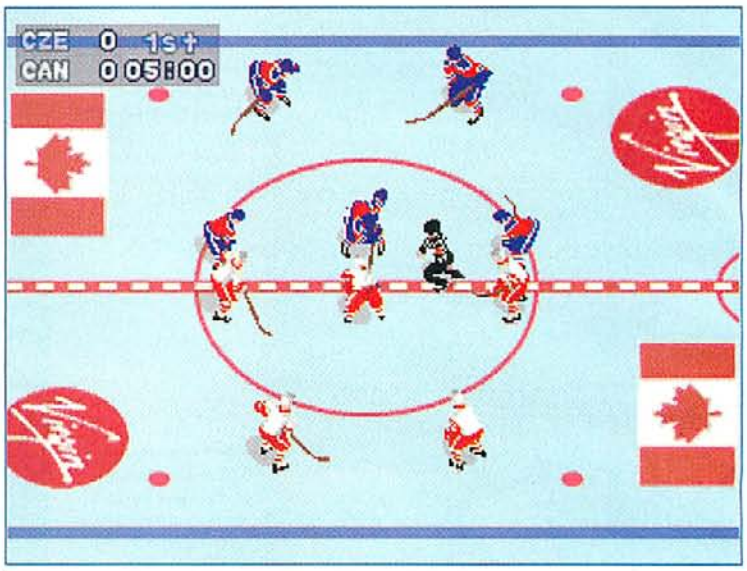
by Gordon Goble

CG SNEAK PREVIEW
GAME STILL IN DEVELOPMENT

Many have tried, but few have succeeded. In the end, it must be concluded that the hockey environment is not easy to depict on the PC. Sure, EA's NHL HOCKEY line has towered over the market lo these many years, and rightfully so. Anyone who's joystick-handled their way through some of the truly frightful alternatives out there knows why: there just isn't anything else.

One near-exception was Accolade's 1995 release, BRETT HULL HOCKEY. While BRETT was no cup contender, and certainly couldn't touch the EA juggernaut, there were hints that the people putting this thing together knew a little about the sport.

The design house responsible for that promising, but seemingly incomplete, project was Vancouver's Radical Entertainment, and now, like a stubborn bulldog, they're at it again. Distributed by Virgin, NHL POWERPLAY '96 is the name of this game, and if the final days of beta testing and refinement can solve a few niggling little details, it will have winner written all over it.



WARM UP FOR THE OLYMPICS In addition to the regular hockey season play, there is an international tourney to play, with teams from across the globe.



HAT TRICK POWERPLAY's gameplay is second to none, complete with great AI, players that play and move like they do in reality, and even team coaching.

FROM THE LOOKS OF IT

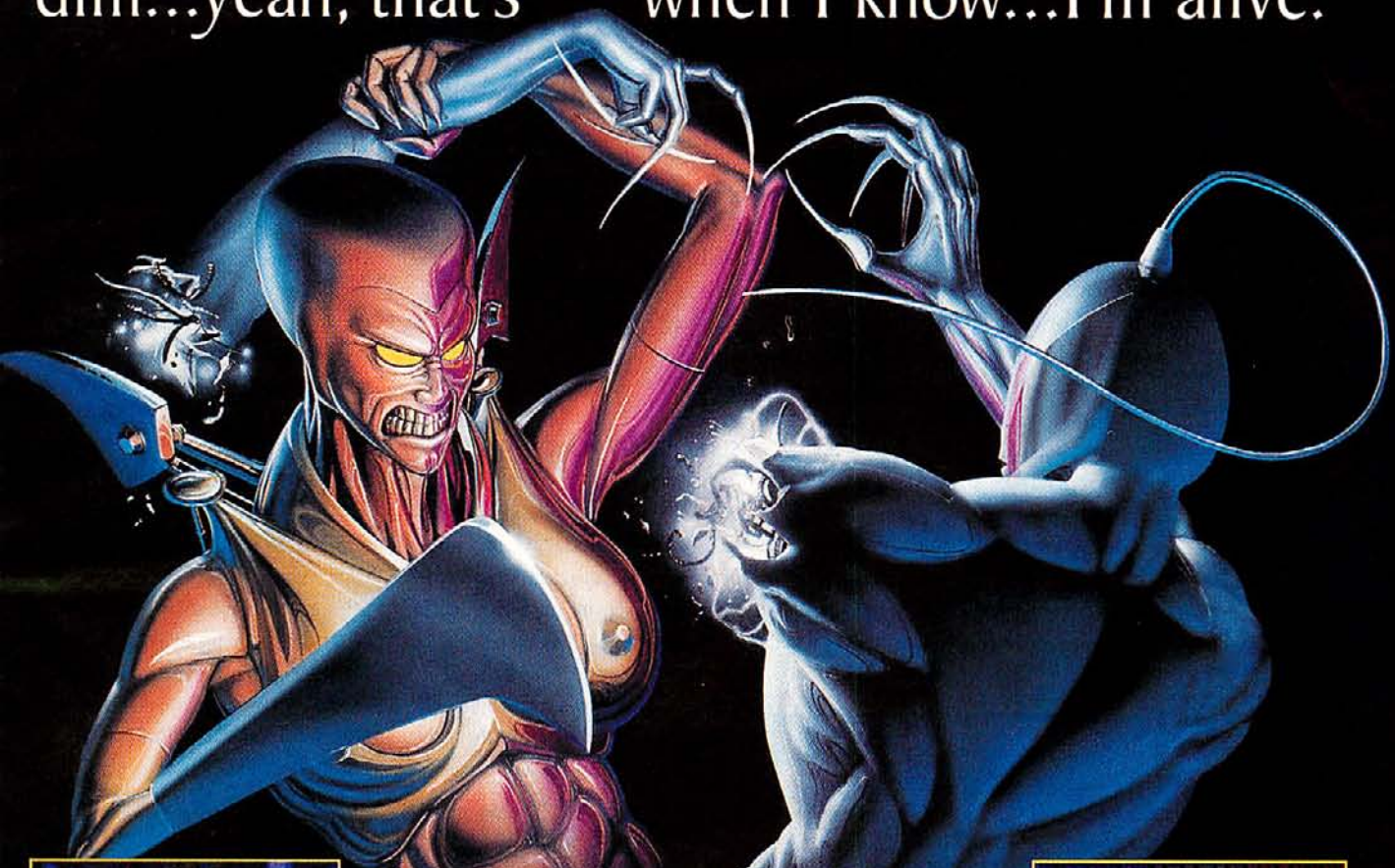
Graphic hounds be forewarned—this won't be the pixelated 3-D masterpiece of NHL HOCKEY '96. There won't be a rink full of free-floating cameras, unearthly zoomable replays or atmospheric extras such as shattering plexiglass, reflecting ice, dislodged nets and feats of "fistic" fury. Furthermore, gameplay will feature just a single panning 70-degree above-ice view of the proceedings—*with no other viewing options!*

But if it's accurate gameplay you're after, with an AI that you'll continue to respect halfway through a long season, POWERPLAY may be your ticket to hockey bliss. Even in the beta version, POWERPLAY skaters seem to be thinking out there, making choices that are both intelligent, diverse, and rarely repetitive—unique in this genre.

During a game, proper positional play is usually observed and only deviated from when opportunity arises. Yes, Islander's scoring machine Ziggy Palffy managed to zip through my defense and home in on my net, but the whole darn team didn't come with him. Instead, the other winger hung toward the left boards, and the defensemen, while certainly pinching, kept an appropriate distance back. This time, a deft kick save preserved a 2-1 game, and as my skater started up ice, he was hounded by a pair of forecheckers while the others slowly retreated. Perfect!

Defenders might tie up puck carriers for several seconds, rendering them unable to pass *or* shoot—a lovely mimicry of the real thing. When they do get a chance to launch one, a slap shot takes longer to set up than a wrist shot, and a backhand carries less momentum than a forehand. Goals aren't dependent on "hot spots," coming from anywhere within reason (I potted a couple from my own end of the ice, but Radical assures that won't be the case in the final version), and you simply don't get the feeling that events are

It's that moment just after you rip it off, when the circuits are still pumping 'cause they don't know what hit 'em, and they've got that expression on their face like "Hey that's my arm!"...the first gush of oil from the open socket...the lights in their eyes going dim...yeah, that's when I know...I'm alive.





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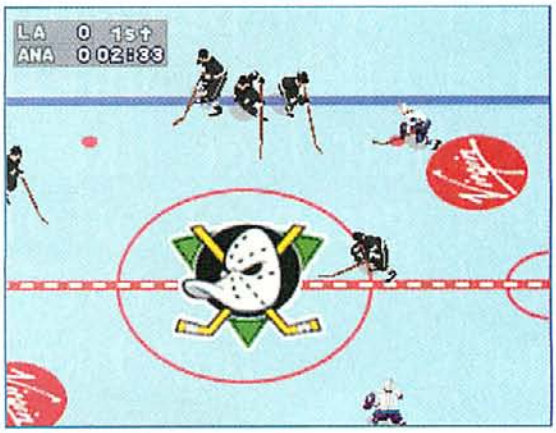
Salvo's Cybernetic Inferno completes a 12 Hit Chaos Combo!

TEEN T AGES 13+

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pre-programmed.

But they're not random either. Penalties seem to be a reflection of contact severity and goals a function of pressure and quality of chance. Outplay and "out chance" the other guys and you should walk away victorious. Since players behave in accordance with their real life characteristics, pick a strong team with star players and it should be pretty easy to trounce the Senators or Sharks.



HOCKEY DUCK Graphically, POWERPLAY is still behind NHL HOCKEY, but it has much more sophisticated and realistic gameplay.

As of this writing, the program plays too fast for my liking, and there are dead spots where computer players will leave my puck carrier untouched for minutes at a time, but Radical says these issues will be addressed prior to release. Even so, I found myself growing to appreciate the game the more I played—usually the mark of a long-term contender.

Sure, I missed some of the gloss I'd grown accustomed to with NHL HOCKEY '96, but it mattered less and less with each game under the belt. I found I was using just a single camera during most of my NHL HOCKEY forays anyway, and although some extraneous stuff would have been appreciated, it isn't a necessity in the long run when the gameplay is this good.

SUMO HOCKEY PLAYERS

Graphically, POWERPLAY is just a 2-D environment, with action far less in-your-face than BRETT HULL. And although players are once again fairly short and squat, with bodies too small for numbers, logos, and a thorough design scheme, numbers and/or names are displayed under the puck carrier, and uniforms do carry basic colors. But it's what they do and the way they move as individuals that really sells the experience.

It's a snappy frame rate to be sure (no doubt due in part to the game's VGA nature), and player animation is strong and smooth. Rocket-like goalie blockers snake out from the body, shooting and skating motions almost transcend a computer game, and reactions to bodychecks are authentic. Even the referee acts the part.

Player actions are further enhanced for owners of six button game pads. For them, nifty little moves such as backward skating, flip passes, hooks, and fast-skating *with the puck* will become second nature, as will manual goalie control for anyone with the desire to don the mask. If you're a joystick-using hockey fan, it's definitely time to try something new.

Off the ice, there's some good and some not-so-good news. On the downside, player trades will not be permitted (although I hear they will be in future products). On a more positive note though, POWERPLAY does breathe new life into the oft-ignored realm of team coaching.

Offensively and defensively, your team's general style of play can be customized before and during each contest. Depending on your instructions, they'll "dump and chase" or carry the puck in when attacking, and set up zone or man-to-man coverage when defending.

Feeling a little surly? If so, the intimidation mode works nicely, but beware of the penalties that come with forceful play. Protecting a lead late in the game? Then tell your crew to hang back. The difference between a quick break offense and a more cautious approach is quite evident and, unlike the real world, POWERPLAY teams always listen to their coach.

NHL & INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS

The high-resolution menuing system features nice background shots of cityscapes and locker rooms and, in beta at least, is concise and very fast. All 26 NHL teams are represented, as are their full rosters with personal statistics and crisp photos of each player. For those who seek global domination, POWERPLAY also offers international squads for play, staffed by the best players, NHL caliber or otherwise, that hail from each country. Game audio is pleasant enough at this stage, highlighted with Vancouver Canucks' rink announcer John Ashbridge doing his own digital hockey shtick.

For better or worse, Virgin has opted to release only a Win 95 version of POWERPLAY '96, a move that will undoubtedly eliminate some prospective users. But for those who've bowed to the latest Gates-concocted platform, POWERPLAY '96 may be the best-playing hockey product *ever*. State-of-the-art graphics won't be found here, but if everything goes according to plan, an authentic and intelligent hockey experience will be, and that's compensation enough for me.

A Return To Good Gameplay

Like most gaming genres, it seems that PC hockey gameplay has recently taken a back seat to vastly improved graphic technology—a prime example was the Accolade/Radical collaboration BRETT HULL HOCKEY. But HULL producer Kevin Wilkinson, now the Radical man in charge of NHL POWERPLAY, has seen the experience as a learning procedure and is out to change all that. "Not much came over from BRETT HULL. POWERPLAY is a whole new thing. I don't think there'll be a better PC hockey game out there when this hits the shelves."

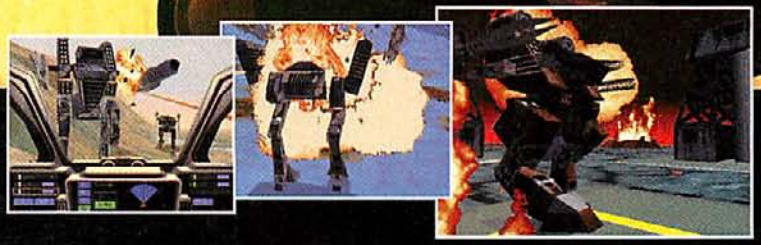
"It's deep in AI, real deep. Sure you can do the same things over and over, like going into the corner and setting up for one-timers, but the more creative you are, the more you'll be rewarded. Players have a ton of possible decisions at any one time, and what they finally do is a reflection of the current situation. There's a number of hidden attributes for each player as well, and that makes things very interesting."

Wilkinson is particularly proud of the player rating system concocted for the game, saying, "I can't give away any secrets, but devising the players' skill levels has been almost a full time job." In practice, the POWERPLAY beta, although still a little buggy and probably just too darn fast, nevertheless does a nice job of displaying these attributes on the ice as well as the stat sheet.

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CLOSE & PLAY

Leave it to the makers of the Walkman to make the near-perfect gaming machine. With an estimated 700,000 units already sold, upstart Sony has broken the Nintendo/Sega headlock on the console industry with their first entry into the gaming maelstrom. When the Playstation debuted in September 1995, it arrived with a deep line-up of first-party and third-party software that showcased the power of this revolutionary gaming machine. Gamers took one look at the 3-D, 360 degree roving camera in games like BATTLE ARENA: TOSHINDEN and RIDGE RACER, and were amazed at the graphics power of the 32-bit console. Even more compelling was the long list of titles in development from established computer game companies like Origin, SSI, Interplay and LucasArts.

When we discovered that Origin was porting WING COMMANDER III to the PC, or that DESCENT was being developed for the Playstation, we were pleasantly surprised. And when we saw that X-COM, *CGW*'s Game of The Year, and PANZER GENERAL, were making their way into the PSX line-up, we knew it was time to take a closer look. What we found was no typical gaming console. With top-notch graphics hardware and unprecendented support from PC vendors, the Playstation can attract even the most hard-core computer gamers.

THE PC VS. THE PLAYSTATION

Can A $300 System Outperform A Computer 10 Times The Price?

by Dave Salvator

Sony has packed a lot of hardware processing power into its new PlayStation. In certain sub-systems—most notably 3D graphics—it smokes even the most high-end gaming PC. Its other sub-systems are no slouches, either, but designing a gaming platform with a $300 base price requires some compromises. One of the ways Sony kept unit cost down was by using small amounts of RAM, with only 2 MB for system, 1 MB for graphics, and 512 KB for audio. While an equipped Playstation costs around $400, a PC gaming rig can easily range from $2,500 to $4,000. The PC obviously has many applications beyond gaming, and is much more expandable, pulling multiple duties as gaming rig, home office work-horse, Internet surfboard, etc. With a PC, you're getting a *lot* more memory and persistent storage (hard-disk space), and several different options for communicating with the outside world.

Because of its dedicated hardware, the Playstation excels at rendering-intensive sports and action games, whereas the PC with its ample RAM, has been the preferred platform for more complex genres like war/stategy, role-playing, and simulations. But both platforms are making inroads into the other's territory. For example, PANZER GENERAL was recently ported to the Sony, while recent PC titles like DUKE NUKEM 3D and EF 2000 deliver graphics quality that beat the PlayStation's.

If you're debating between a PC or a Playstation, you should first consider what kinds of games you like to play, and how much versatility you need. A Playstation will deliver a lot of action-packed fun and maybe even some war/strategy titles, but not much else. PCs, on the other hand, are close to delivering equal or superior performance in all game categories, but you'll have to pay a lot more for the extra versatility and horsepower.

Let's take a look at the sub-systems of these two platforms to see how they compare.

BRAINS & STORAGE

The PlayStation uses a Sony CPU, a 32-bit processor that runs at 33 MHz. The R3000A has an internal Level 1 cache with 4 KB for instructions, and 1 KB for data. In addition to performing CPU duties, this chip has some of the graphics sub-system embedded in it. For the sake of simplifying a comparison, we'll consider a Pentium 100 MHz, a 64-bit chip. The Pentium has an internal 16 KB Level 1 cache, and many PCs also ship with a 256 KB level 2 (external) SRAM cache for increased performance. A key difference between the two platforms is the amount of system memory: Playstation has only 2 MB of system RAM, whereas a PC usually has about 16 MB, and more can be added easily. The PlayStation currently has no provision for adding more RAM.

Direct CPU comparisons are always tricky, because what makes one chip "better" than another doesn't correlate directly to faster clock speed, higher bit-width, or architecture. While the Pentium is probably the faster chip, the Playstation still has a superior graphics sub-system that does more of the rendering work, so its CPU is free to execute other game code.



EIGHT IS ENOUGH For multiplayer sports games, Sony has a "multitap" device which can accomodate up to four controllers. With two multitaps, up to eight can play.

Currently, rendering-intensive games on the PC require a great deal of the CPU for rendering before passing the task to the graphics accelerator. Most PC action games are "graphics-bound" meaning that while they have ample CPU horsepower to run the game code itself, they're additionally saddled with a lot of the 3D rendering work. There's a phalanx of 3D chips that'll soon be appearing on a PC graphics board near you, but they're not quite here yet. Also, Microsoft's Direct3D API is still pretty much a work in progress, meaning that game writers still have to optimize their titles for specific chips.

GRAPHIC PERFORMANCE

What makes the PlayStation's graphics sub-system superior to the PC's? PlayStation has three components that make it happen: the Geometry Tranform Engine (GTE), the Graphics Processing Unit (GPU), and the Data Decompression Engine (MDEC). The GTE and MDEC are embedded in the PlayStation's CPU, while the GPU is a separate chip. Working together, the GTE and GPU join forces to enable a maximum resolution of 640x480x24-bit (16.7 million colors), though according to Sony most titles are written using a 16-bit color depth (65,530 colors).



OF MICE AND MACHINES Playing strategy games with a gamepad can be a hassle, which is why Sony offers a mouse for point-and-click titles.

PCs have 64-bit graphics accelerators that are designed to accelerate 2D graphics most frequently used by DOS and Windows, and help decode digital video. PC video cards have gotten very good at these two tasks, but their 3D performance is still lacking. Diamond, Matrox and Creative Labs are all shipping 3D accelerator boards, though none of them can match the PlayStation's performance bit for bit.



ACCESSORIES With a link cable (for linking PlayStations) and RFU adaptor (for connecting to older TVs), a second controller and memory cards, the PlayStation's final price tag jumps to between $400 and $500.

For 3D rendering, the GPU can pump out about 90,000 texture mapped, Z-sorted, perspective-corrected, Gouraud-shaded polygons per second, while the GTE can set up 1.5 million flat-shaded polygons per second. The end result is rendering on action games that PC titles have only recently been able to match, because PCs have not had dedicated hardware for 3D rendering. But given the number of 3D accelerator boards slated for release this year, PlayStation won't hold the advantage much longer.

The PlayStation does have a downside here, though. Using your television as its display, image quality is compromised by the TV's lower resolution, interlaced display. The visible result is aliasing, or "jaggies" which are noticable on diagonal and curved lines. Most PC monitors are non-interlaced, so well-rendered graphics images aren't distorted.

As for digital video, PlayStation's MDEC can decode full-screen video streams smoothly from the CD-ROM. PlayStation uses a video compression scheme somewhat similar to Motion-JPEG, a close cousin to the more versatile MPEG. PCs for their part don't have dedicated hardware to accelerate the compression algorithms, but newer graphics boards can smoothly "stretch" smaller video frame sizes to full-screen, and also perform color space conversion.

All in all, the PlayStation does hold the upper hand in graphics performance, but for how much longer is debatable. PC hardware (and software) is making great strides in 3D rendering that may yield higher graphics performance than the PlayStation. But here again price is a major factor: the whole PlayStation system costs about the same as some of the upcoming 3D graphics boards.

THE AUDIO FILE

Sony's audio production happens in its Sound Processor Unit (SPU), which has 512 KB of dedicated RAM. The SPU is designed to produce 24 channels of audio, and its maximum sampling rate is the same as CD-quality audio. The SPU can also add real-time effects like reverb to sounds to simulate what a hockey slapshot would sound like in a large arena, for example. The overall sound quality on the titles we've heard is very good.

PC sound cards are capable of CD-quality audio, but many PC games opt instead for lower-quality 11 KHz 8-bit audio, sounding something like an AM radio. New titles use more 16-bit audio, dramatically improving overall sound quality. Only a few sound cards have dedicated hardware for real-time effects, and the dearth of effects-capable boards means few PC game titles try to take advantage of those features. Most sound cards only have wave-table synthesizers to add background music, and a few sound effects. Playstation's SPU can be programmed to work like a synthesizer, but uses too much of that precious 512 KB of audio memory. As an alternative, PlayStation usually plays audio CD cuts direct from the CD as background music.

STORAGE AND CONNECTIVITY

The PlayStation is equipped with a 2x CD-ROM drive which loads a game when the unit is turned on. Once data for a level or scene is loaded, some titles play audio CD tracks during game play, or the drive sits idle, waiting for the next disc call from the game. A PC's 6x CD-ROM data rate is triple that of the PlayStation's, allowing new levels and scenes to be loaded into RAM much faster. And the PC has plenty of storage on its hard-drive for saving games and configurations. It takes a 128K SRAM card (ca. $25) to save on the PlayStation.

When the urge strikes to find some off-site opponents, the PlayStation doesn't bring a lot to the party. There is a serial cable connector (about $20) that allows point-to-point gaming between two machines, but there's no networking capability yet. PCs in contrast have several ready ways of communicating with one another: direct connect via serial port, modems and network cards.

ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR

– COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, 1996

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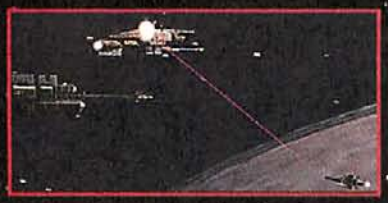
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– JERRY POURNELLE, BYTE MAGAZINE, 1996

"OUTSTANDING AND SUSPENSEFUL!... BEAUTIFUL VISUALS AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING PLOT."

– PC GAMER, 1996

"A MUST-HAVE FOR *STAR TREK* FANS!"

– STRATEGY PLUS, 1996

"ENGROSSING."

– USA TODAY, 1996

"IF YOU MISS THIS GAME, YOU WILL MISS ONE OF THE BEST ADVENTURES OF THIS DECADE."

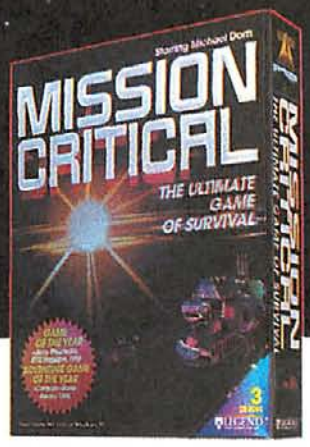
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The Best And The Worst

If you don't play any other games, you have to try these five games, which showcase the Playstation's power. And if you're in need of some advice on which titles to avoid, , sneak a peek at the five worst list.

THE FIVE BEST PLAYSTATION GAMES

1. Air Combat (Namco)
2. Tekken (Namco)
3. Wipeout (Psygnosis)
4. Warhawk (Sony)
5. NHL Face Off (Sony)

THE FIVE WORST PLAYSTATION GAMES

1. Revolution X (Acclaim)
2. Street Fighter: The Movie (Capcom)
3. Rise 2: Resurrection (Acclaim)
4. CyberSled (Namco)
5. Defcon 5 (Data East)

HOT BUTTONS

The PlayStation controller features four buttons topside in addition to four buttons on its front side (faces away from you). The controller is generally very good for action games, though few games make use of all eight buttons, probably to avoid confusion. PlayStations ship with one controller, and a second will run about $25. Additionally, Sony makes a multi-tap that allows eight controllers to be connected to a single PlayStation, handy for sports 4-on-4 games, though eight can be a crowd around a single TV. Sony also makes a mouse (about $35) that, while not crucial, makes for easier menu navigation. The company is also developing a twin-joystick controller to drive vehicles in games like MechWarrior 2, though they don't yet have a release date for it.

On the PC side, a wide variety of controllers can make PC titles easier to navigate and control. Prices vary widely, as does controller quality, but several vendors offer solid controllers. For multiplayer support, Advanced Gravis recently shipped the GRiP, which allows four Gravis GamePads to be connected to a PC for four-player sports games.

AND THE WINNER IS...

In the big picture, these two platforms were designed for markedly different uses. The Playstation is a box for lovers of sports and action games who don't need the unit to fufill any other role. For its price, Playstation packs a wallop. A PC gaming rig will put a considerably larger dent in your cash flow, but it's much more versatile.

Looking at different sub-systems, the PlayStation wins out for graphics and has real-time audio effects that give it a slight edge in this area. But the advantage in graphics performance will probably be short-lived, and the PC wins out in amount of RAM, storage, connectivity and variety of available input devices. The Playstation still maintains one important advantage for rendering-intensive 3-D games: game developers know exactly what hardware the system has, whereas PC title developers have to use a least-common-denominator approach so that their title will run sufficiently fast on slower systems. Microsoft's DirectX APIs will address the problem of varying hardware, but that improvement isn't quite here yet.

PlayStation vs. Sega Saturn vs. PC

	Sony PlayStation	Sega Saturn	PC Gaming System
Price	$300	$300	$2-4,000
What Comes in the Box	console, 1 controller, A/V cabling	console, 1 controller, A/V cabling	Varies
CPU(s)	R3000A, 32-bit, 33 MHz	two Hitachi SH2s, 32-bit, 28.6 MHz, one Hitachi SH1, 32-bit	Pentium, 64-bit, 100-166 MHz
System RAM	2 MB	2 MB	16-32 MB
Graphics Chip(s)	Some of graphics system embedded in CPU. Sony GPU	VDP1 and VDP2 processors	Varies
Graphics RAM	1 MB	1.5 MB	2-4 MB
Audio Chip	Sony Sound Processing Unit (SPU)	Motorola 68EC000, Yamaha FH1 DSP	Varies
Audio RAM	512 KB	540 KB	usually 512 KB
MIDI Synthesis	SPU can be setup as wavetable synth	FM and PCM synthesis	wavetable or FM
CD-ROM data rate	300 (2X) KB/sec	320 (2X) KB/sec	typically 6-900 (4-6X) KB/sec
Persistent Memory /Storage	128 KB SRAM cards	512 KB cartridges	500 MB-1GB hard drive
Connectivity	Two PlayStations can be daisy-chained	No provision listed	Modem or network functionality readily added

OPEN THE FLOOD GATES

Fast Cars, Furious Fighters and Psychotic Russians

by Peter Olafson

Action is what the Playstation is all about. It is its meat and potatoes, the largest beneficiary of the machine's power, and the source of much of its popularity. The best Playstation games are action: driving, fighting, flying, platform and shooting games. Load 'em up, and hang on.

3-D ACTION

Doom started this genre, and if it weren't for that demon-splattering bloodfest, we'd never have the trio here. Alien Trilogy (Acclaim), the only decent "Alien"-based game available, pays homage to the trilogy with a mission-based stroll through a giant derelict spaceship, a cocooned colony and a prison. The graphics are inconsistent and the game's not exactly scary, but it's fun enough that you won't notice.

Space Griffon VF-9 (Atlus) is one of the earliest, and most underrated, Doom-style games for the Playstation. It has a pseudo RPG feel as you explore a moonbase with teammates, talking via comlink. Some graphics are sloppy, though, and the controls are elusive and sometimes unnecessary.

Kileak: The DNA Imperative (Sony) is a game with uninspired levels and stupid enemies, but it does have some nice architectural touches, basic but well-integrated puzzles and a rich, polished veneer.

RACING GAMES

There's no shortage of racing games on the Playstation. One of the first, Ridge Racer (Namco), was mobbed in the arcades, and has been effectively translated. The resolution's been knocked down a bit but the play, the elaborate background graphics and the slippery handling are all in place. Too bad you're only racing on expanded versions of a single track.



DESTRUCTION DERBY For flying into cars, smashing up doors, flipping hapless drivers end over end, there's no better game than this.



TWISTED METAL If you want undiluted mayhem and violence, drive on down to the arena for car-blasting fun.

The Need for Speed (EA) has come a long way from the 3DO original, with better scenery, new tracks, a deepened view and a full-field racing game to supplement the grudge match. However, adopting the racing-game format sacrifices some of the game's individuality. The ribbon of road is too narrow, and crashes aren't as exciting in this version.

Destruction Derby (Psygnosis) is a must-have game, not simply for the frenetic action, but for its marvelous use of progressive damage. It's a great visual effect, and also a measure of the car's deteriorating handling and road-worthiness. There are also a half-dozen small tracks, where demolition rules still apply, but the idea is to get to the finish line first. The problem is that the game's just not...destructive enough.

For more straight-forward destruction, steer toward Twisted Metal (Sony). This is car wars plain and simple: arena combat against opponents ranging from armed ice-cream trucks to 18-wheeler cabs to military vehicles. If you're not a flaming hulk when it's over, it's on to the next arena.

Automotive violence isn't restricted to arenas. The Playstation translation of Bullfrog's race-and-shoot hovercraft game, Hi-Octane (EA), takes it out on the tracks, with beguilingly easy controls that create a true hovering experience.

Road Rash (EA) is identical to the 3DO version, but don't let that deter you. This motorcycle racing game was a classic in its first 32-bit rendition due to its manic speed and violence, and both are preserved here.



Mission Briefing: Problem reported at Bio-Weapons Research facility in Raccoon Hills. No communication with Science Staff in six weeks. No response

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Your team should not be misled by the neat and orderly appearance of this isolated mansion. A major corporation's been conducting questionable research here. You'll soon discover the results of some very, very careless experiments.



From hyper-realistic 3D lighting and an ominous CD quality sound-track and special effects, to unique action perspectives, this intense drama unfolds, building terror and suspense with every new room you wander through.



Fight or flight? When you're under-powered and on the run, split-second decision making abilities are key. Discover and arm yourself with anything you find: knives, pistols, shotguns, flame-throwers and more.



This twisted 32-bit polygon-based blood-bath isn't limited to gleaming dining rooms and endless polished hallways. Answers are found in darkest corners of the estate cemetery, crumbling guest houses, and a mysterious tower.

from initial reconnaissance team. No backup. You are on your own.

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Wipeout

WIPEOUT (Sony) is smoothness personified. It's a totally immersive hovercraft racing game, but even "immersive" doesn't quite say enough. This one gets under your skin, even without a VR helmet. WIPEOUT never reminds you that it's running on a machine subject to constraints of CD access and loading times. It just envelops you. You pop it in, strap it on, and race in a sort of cockpit hush. The looping track speeds by as if seen from a car. The powerups start to seem like second nature. The jumps are just long enough to make you want to look down. And the track is just wide enough that you don't feel like a captive.

But you are.



Two games worth avoiding are ESPN EXTREME GAMES (Sony) and CYBERSPEED (Mindscape). The former is a violent race through gates on skateboard, rollerblades, land luge and mountain bike. The synthesis of all these elements doesn't really work, and the tracks are uninspired. CYBERSPEED was a lamentable race-on-a-wire Windows 95 game, and while the Playstation version has a bigger, more in-your-face feel, it's essentially the same bad game.

FIGHTING GAMES

Fighting games on the Playstation are among the best the industry has to offer. STREET FIGHTER ALPHA (Capcom), an animated 2-D fighter, is a good example. It's fast and responsive, the enemies are varied and smart, and none of them just kissed the canvas; they always put up a good fight even as I moved in for the kill. I especially liked it because I could win by playing conservatively without having to memorize special moves first (or rather, by picking them up as I played).

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN (Sony), is also a top-notch game, ranking a close second to TEKKEN among 3-D fighters. Here, more than the character is 3-D: you can dodge right and left and call upon magic. The only reason I give it second ranking is that it's not quite as hands-on as TEKKEN—you use weapons to fight—and doesn't have the same sense of impact.



STREET FIGHTER ALPHA Sure it's a 2-D fighter, but it's got rich animated graphics and great gameplay.



BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN No game showcases 3-D more than Toshinden, which lets you dodge left and right and displays action in all 360 degrees.

On the other hand, I'm of two minds on CRITICOM (Vic Tokai). On the surface, it's a hybrid of the two great Playstation fighters, with the look of TEKKEN and the sophisticated moves of TOSHINDEN. But it isn't exactly fun. The characters are too mannequin-like and you end up not caring for your fighter. ZERO DIVIDE (Time-Warner) also owes much to TEKKEN, but comes off busy and muddled—both in its complex polygonal figures and hard-to-execute special moves.

Nor can I bring myself to get too excited over MORTAL KOMBAT 3 (Sony). The excessive blood no longer distinguishes it from other beat-ups, and is sometimes downright silly. What's left is an average, nicely-animated fighter.

Of course, sometimes silliness works great. I don't like PRIMAL RAGE (Time-Warner) because it's a good fighting game. I like it because it's downright goofy. Imagine a bunch of Godzilla stand-ins, battling it out with snout gouges and tail whips amid torrential outpourings of blood as human worshippers look on.

Doom

The venerable father of 3-D is an incontrovertible classic of this genre, and it is no less a classic on the Playstation. For sheer, lusty abandon, blood & guts, treachery and unalloyed terror, it knows few equals.

DOOM (Williams) for the Playstation is a one-stop shop: you can toggle between ULTIMATE DOOM and DOOM II at the main menu. The speed is superb in the near-full-screen mode. The music is wonderfully brooding, and the deathmatch and cooperative multiplayer modes—the meat of DOOM—are included, though you'll need a linking cable to use them.



Though better than the Jaguar and 3DO versions, Playstation DOOM isn't a straight PC translation. The graphics have been knocked down a peg. Devotees of the original game will notice a reduction in colors, lighting effects, subtle simplifications in level architecture and the odd missing texture.

But the feel is entirely intact, and the feel is what counts.

Tekken

TEKKEN (Namco) is simply unrivaled among Playstation beat-em-ups. It's the game that feels most like what it's all about: fighting. (Indeed, the only comparable games are VIRTUA FIGHTER REMIX and VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 on the Saturn.)



When these big, richly drawn characters go down, in a flurry of fists and feet, they really go down. You feel as though you've been beaten up yourself. No wonder the winner does a victory dance.

It's in 3-D, and that makes all the difference. These '90s rock-em sock-em characters seem to genuinely occupy space and carry weight. In fact, could you excuse me for a sec? I need a cold compress. I just got my ass kicked by the marine...again.

Then there are the atrocious fighters. STREET FIGHTER: THE MOVIE (Capcom) uses stiff digitized characters for the fighters, and some of the fights are just ridiculous. Sharing the bottom of the barrel is RISE 2: RESURRECTION (Acclaim), which made me long for its poor ancestor, RISE OF THE ROBOTS. The sequel uses small, graphically muddy creations and dispenses with story entirely.

FLYING GAMES

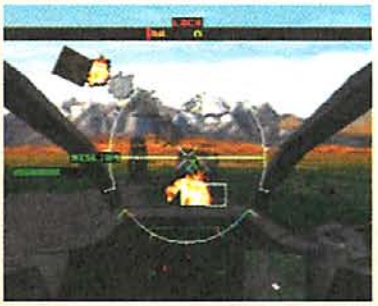
AGILE WARRIOR (Virgin) is one of several good flying games for the Playstation. It's a pure arcade game—you collect floating powerups when you destroy certain buildings—but it brings ground detail to a whole new level. It's great fun to literally blow the roofs off radar buildings, and watch guard towers keel over.

THUNDERSTRIKE 2 (U.S. Gold) is from the same general school—except with a helicopter. You're running from the frying pan to the fire in 26 substantial missions, and you're in AGILE WARRIOR territory from the start: great terrain, incredible explosions and tasks whose completion will fill your heart.



WARHAWK Forget realism. This game is absolute fun, with spectacular graphics and pulse-pounding action.

There's one more arcade flyer, and it's good. WARHAWK (Sony) is more of a fantasy campaign than a military sim. You're piloting the experimental WarHawk to stop the forces of a leader known only as Kreel. The missions are memorable, the graphics are often spectacular and



THUNDERSTRIKE This helicopter flight game is full of gorgeous terrain and exploding buildings.

you always feel at the heart of the action.

PLATFORM GAMES

Interestingly, platformers aren't big on the Playstation. But the ones that have been released are no worse than average...and I found at least one charmer in the bunch.

JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE (U.S. Gold) has some of the goofy feel of EARTHWORM JIM and some of the rendered look of DONKEY KONG COUNTRY. You're a musical warrior with a giant knob of red hair, gunning down all comers and grabbing musical staves. The graphics are good, the levels are challenging enough to keep your attention, but JOHNNY lacks a certain magic to propel it beyond mere platformhood.

The same goes for GEX (Crystal Dynamics). Without Dana Gould, this 3DO conversion would be a solid platformer with a lizard. With him, it's a solid platformer with a lizard who makes annoying puns on every other stage.

My favorite turned out to be RAYMAN (Ubi Soft), a sweet, almost Disneyesque platform-hopper designed for the young and young at heart. How could anyone not like this little guy, who closes his eyes happily when he jumps in the air and sticks his tongue out on cue?

SHOOTERS

Blasters of all description have been released for the Playstation, and they're a mixed lot. Some are electrifying, some are dire...and a few will

Air Combat

The things I've seen in AIR COMBAT (Namco). I've followed oil pipelines to refineries and sent them up in smoke. I've come in over enemy cities at night—so low I could see the neon signs atop high rises—and blown installations right out the side of office buildings. I've hit their industry on land, and their Navy at sea, and left them smoking. After all, this is war.

This is a system-seller. In this arcade flight sim, you're a mercenary running an air campaign against an aggressive enemy, and it doesn't just mean shuffling paper. You'll fly missions of all description in all manner of planes, and you can use the money you earn to buy more, hire wingmen of varying experience and assign them orders.



The game looks fantastic. I've seen such beautiful textures and surface structures only in the most elaborate computer games, and even there I've rarely seen smoke that looked more real. Even the planes—a whole raft of them, from B-52s and C-5 transports—look good, and you'll get to see them up close. My only complaint is the size of the game. Sixteen missions is about eight too few for my blood. Sequel, please.



RAYMAN Here's the cutest platform game on the Playstation, with levels of colorful fun.

surprise you.

ASSAULT RIGS (Psygnosis) is one of the more pleasant surprises. This is essentially a fine-tuned version of CYBERSLED. You still have to blast opponents, but also grab the necessary gems and find the exit, while negotiating treacherous multilevel terrain. But the one-player game lacks sufficient challenge. It's better on two machines than one.

CYBERSLED itself, however, turns out to be Namco's only Playstation miss so far. This coin-op conversion is unadorned arena combat where two polygonal tanks square off against each other until one of them gives up the ghost in a gas-fired explosion. The arenas aren't especially large or complex, and the battles often turn into Old West quick draws.

KRAZY IVAN (Psygnosis) is the closest thing to a MECHWARRIOR-style game for the Playstation. You're a paranoid schizophrenic Russian soldier in a 40-foot high Steel Cossack powersuit with orders to defend the earth from aliens. So off you go, rolling in smooth 3-D over sculpted gray-green hills, blowing up everything in sight, collecting the tiny human hostages that appear afterward and destroying the generators that produce the alien's expanding energy shields. You're in for a good time here.

For some action in space, JUPITER STRIKE (Acclaim) wouldn't be a bad choice. The graphics are hardly cutting edge, but I enjoyed its mix of shooting and targeting. Then there's VIEWPOINT (EA), an isometric blaster from the Neo-Geo. It's one of the prettiest shooters, with lusciously rendered scenery, but it's also infuriatingly difficult.

Try PHILOSOMA (Sony) for something different. Its gimmick is a mercurial view. Stand in one place for too long and it switches styles on you: horizontal shooter, 3-D, front-to-rear perspective 3-D, ZAXXON-style isometrics—you name it, it's in here. Despite the mess, it manages to achieve a certain consistency of tone. Unfortunately, it's too easy to beat.

CYBERIA (Interplay) also tries for multistyle play, but in a more creative way: It uses 11 distinct action sequences as punctuation in a strong graphic adventure. Like the PC version, you'll solve puzzles and explore places, but the action is solid, too, right from the first-level gun turrets.

For a sideways-scroller, you can't do better than IN THE HUNT (THQ)—a sumptuous blaster in which virtually everything can be blown to bits. Torpedoes fired from your little submarine lay waste to everything in your horizontal path, while missiles wreak glorious havok on the elaborate structures above. The only problem is that the sub sometimes has only a small amount of room to maneuver.



ASSAULT RIGS This 3-D tank shooter is fun alone, but an absolute riot when played competetively between two machines.

For more earthbound action, try OFF-WORLD INTERCEPTOR EXTREME (Crystal Dynamics). A monster-truck rally gone awry, it lacks TOTAL ECLIPSE's variety—no tunnels here—but because you have more control of your craft, you can experience the game more fully.

Old games can be fun, too. RAIDEN PROJECT (Sony) is a charming blast from the past. A descendant of great vertical blasters like 1942, this rich top-down vertical shooter offers loads of large, aggressive sprites for you to detonate.

Fast-flying shooting isn't all good, though. NOVASTORM (Psygnosis) and TOTAL ECLIPSE TURBO (Crystal Dynamics) are both disappointing. The first is like MICROCOSM without the blood vessels and is rather old-hat, while the latter, for all its fast 3-D shooting in tunnels and skylanes, just comes off dated. SHOCKWAVE ASSAULT (EA), a bundle of two 3-D shooters, SHOCKWAVE and its add-on OPERATION JUMPGATE, likewise suffers from old age. A good game on the 3DO a few years ago, SHOCKWAVE's gameplay is too restrictive these days.

And at the bottom of the barrel we have the "to avoid" list. LOADED (Interplay), a top-down maze shooter, is the bloodiest game on the Playstation. When you kill an enemy it makes a very wet "SPLAT!", and you'll see a red silhouette on the floor. I made many red silhouettes, laughed a bit, and then looked around for the game. Unhappily, LOADED came up empty. The same goes for REVOLUTION X (Acclaim), the only gun game for the Playstation. We didn't waste any time on this game, and you shouldn't either.

Jumping Flash

JUMPING FLASH (Sony) is a platformer with a difference: 3-D. Rather than bouncing around the landscape in a side-view, you're in the game, looking through the eyes of your character. Don't worry: This isn't another DOOM-style game. All the platform rules apply in this action/adventure—the head bounces that kill, bonus stages and power-ups. And because the play area is deep, as well as wide, there's so much more to see and try out.

It may take platform vets a little while to get into this new "head." But I found it utterly captivating. It's an experience you won't want to miss.



THE WHOLE NINE YARDS

The Game Isn't Over, But The Score Is Looking Good

by Peter Olafson

Sports on the Playstation? Stay tuned. There aren't a lot of games out, but a whole locker-room full of stuff is headed our way. However, a few of the games released to date are exquisite.

Take, for example, NFL GAMEDAY. This smoothly-animated football game reminds me of the games in EA's MADDEN line—with rational, Madden-like controls on screen—but with a greater sense of intimacy and closeness. It got me caring about football games again—something I haven't done in a long time.

But it's April now, and you're probably looking for a baseball game. Unfortunately, as we went to press, there was only one, and it was bad. BASES LOADED '96 DOUBLEHEADER (Jaleco) has mediocre graphics, including a skewed pitcher-batter perspective, and suffers difficult batting and pitching that results in pathetically low-scoring games.

You're in luck if you like basketball, though. IN THE ZONE (Konami) offers a more realistic turn on 3-D basketball games like SLAM N JAM. The large size of the players helps bring the game home, and their smooth movement and realistic execution of dunks and jumpers sells it. You should note, however, that it is strictly an action game, without substitutions or even a full-season mode. NBA JAM TOURNAMENT EDITION (Acclaim) is something a little different: a hybrid of basketball and shoot-em-up in which power-ups hold court—like slamming the ball home from anywhere on the court and levitating above the backboard. COLLEGE SLAM (Acclaim), an amateurish NBA JAM, is worse. It has a ridiculous roster of power-ups, like reversing the direction of balls in flight, frying your rim with lightning to prevent your opponent from scoring, and making a teammate invisible. It also has an ugly introduction and some bad graphics.

Soccer is well-represented on the Playstation, and FIFA 96: VIRTUAL STADIUM SOCCER (EA) unequivocally rules the roost. I've never played a game that so accurately and excitingly reflects what takes place on the field, or one that makes this hard-to-embrace sport so accessible. Nothing of consequence is missing, and virtually anything you're uncomfortable with in the default settings can be adjusted to your liking. GOAL STORM (Konami) is another strong contender. It's not quite up to FIFA's realism or depth, but it has big, clearly-drawn polygonal characters and, most importantly, it's fun to play. On the other hand, I never could quite get a handle on STRIKER 96 (Acclaim). It was all I could do to get my foot on the ball and understand the thick accent of the English announcer. The moment I liked best is when the players walked off the field at the end of the game.

WORLD CUP GOLF (U.S. Gold) is merely an average golf game. It's amusing at times, but the game is graphically muddy. Feature for feature, it can't compare to PGA TOUR 96 (Electronic Arts), which looks great, plays intuitively, and, best of all, is challenging. It's definitely a keeper. We're also looking forward to VR SPORTS GOLF (Interplay), a game that promises more camera angles and faster play than anything currently available.



NFL GAMEDAY This football game evokes images of JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL; high praise indeed.

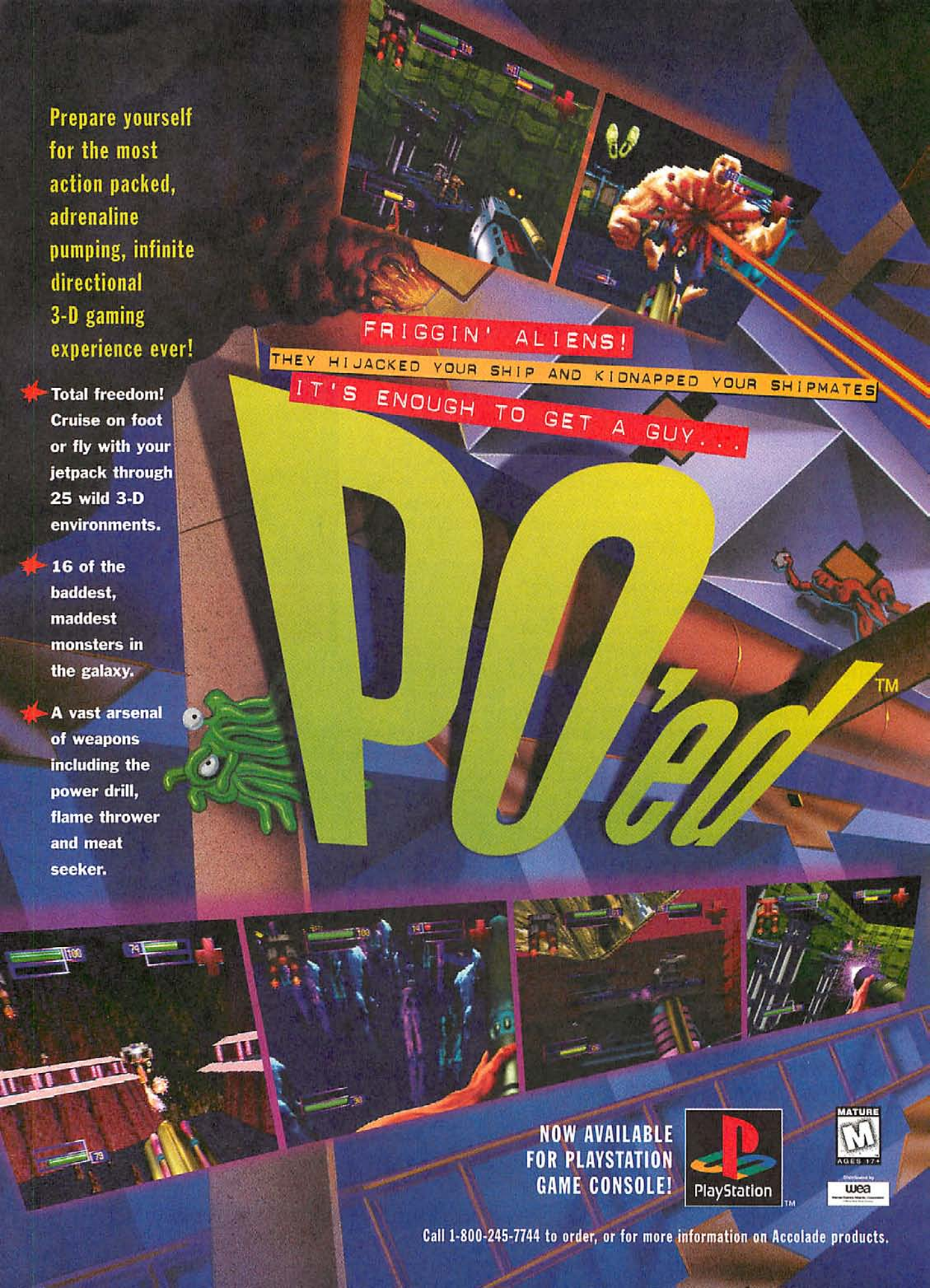
The rest are odds and ends. The first-person tennis premise behind POWER SERVE 3D TENNIS (Ocean) is a fine one, but the game is frustrating. It doesn't even have a practice mode to learn how to hit the ball. WWF WRESTLEMANIA: THE ARCADE GAME (Acclaim) captures nicely the flavor of this silly, theatrical "sport," and can be played for some good laughs.

NHL Face Off

In hockey, though, we have greatness. NHL FACE OFF (Sony) has the "feel" of professional ice hockey down to a science. It has the game's running-water fluidity. It has great game sounds. It has the checks (but not the fights), and the penalties. It has the gleam of the ice, but not the skate marks. It has the real NHL players, exhibition and full-season play (including the playoffs), and the ability to create, draft, trade and release players (but not argue over salaries). You can edit your lines or assign the computer to take over as goalie. You can also change the view to suit your taste.

Most importantly, NHL FACE OFF has the moves. Complaints? Not a one.




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WINNING STRATEGIES

Wargames March Into A New Front

by Peter Olafson

Ah, strategy. Without this section, where would we fit war games, puzzles, strategy games and other miscellaneous titles that challenge you to think? These games clinched the decision to cover the Playstation, and their debut on this platform is definitely a sign of good things to come.

Hard-core wargamers will find a pleasant surprise on the Playstation: PANZER GENERAL (SSI). For those who don't know, this is a delightful, hassle-free World War II campaign from the German side. But don't think for a moment that, because it's simple to play, it's easy to win. Germany may have rolled over Poland in 1939, but its defenders will go out fighting. DEFCON 5 (Data East) is a mixed bag of strategy, exploration and action that finds you defending an outpost. It's not a bad idea, but the components, especially the WOLFENSTEIN 3-D segments, are of inconsistent quality, and the game never quite congeals into a whole. The Playstation also boasts RETURN FIRE (Time-Warner Interactive), the sequel to the venerable Amiga classic, FIREPOWER. It's a splendid game of capture-the-flag, with notable improvements over the original. Now, you command tanks, choppers, jeeps and missile launchers in a series of island scenarios against a much more challenging enemy.



PANZER GENERAL The best of wargames has come to the Playstation, and is a very faithful port.

A-TRAIN (Maxis) and THEME PARK (Electronic Arts) are games in the SIMCITY vein, and both perform very much like the originals. In THEME PARK, you build an amusement park, while in A-TRAIN you construct railroads. In both, as a bonus, you can literally enter the world you create. THEME PARK's 3-D world isn't implemented very well, as the first-person, polygonal park is rough in appearance, deserted, noninteractive, and hard to navigate. A-TRAIN is a better success, where you can ride any of your buses or train routes and watch the scenery roll by in the four cardinal directions. You can even switch the view between them at will. In each case, it's immensely satisfying being able to wander through the very parks or trains you built yourself. I certainly hope this is a trend that other games will follow.

THE CHESSMASTER 3-D (Mindscape) also makes it to the Playstation. It's a more than respectable opponent, using the CHESSMASTER 4000 engine, and should keep your hand firmly attached to your chin.

There are also several games on the puzzle front. 3D LEMMINGS (Psygnosis) is the natural extension of the LEMMINGS universe into another dimension, with new 3-D Lemmings—like Turners—that may take a while to get used to. Once achieved, it's as playable, as charming, as maddening as ever. For simple diversion without addiction, there is ZOOP (Viacom), which is more or less TEMPEST, where you shoot down approaching colored squares from within a central grid. Another is GEOM CUBE (American Technos), which is competitive WELLTRIS.

X-Com UFO Defense

X-COM, *CGW*'s 1994 Game of the Year, has been ported to the Playstation, seeming proof that the world has indeed been taken over by aliens. Hah! We X-COM veterans must expose this UFO wannabe for the monthly supermarket checkout line fodder that it is.



X-COM is hardly a fast-paced game on the PC, but I could have fixed a sandwich between CD load times here. A bigger problem was the gamepad, so unsuitable for this game that I had to replace it with a Playstation mouse. Otherwise, the game mechanics are the same.

The aliens can't see your hidden units, just as in the PC. But the more aliens the AI had to move, the less felicity it showed in patrolling, maximizing fields of fire and so forth—probably a memory limitation. To offset this, the aliens were "tweaked" to fire much more accurately than in the PC version. Interception of UFOs is also tougher here, because the AI runs away faster, and your fire is curiously less accurate.

Do these cheats hurt? Not that much, really, because the core of the game is intact in all its strategic and research-heavy glory. Tactically, the AI still pounces on weak human moves with those nasty Alien Grenades, and Mind Control is as effectively creepy as ever. But it is not quite an equitable substitute for the PC version.
—Terry Coleman

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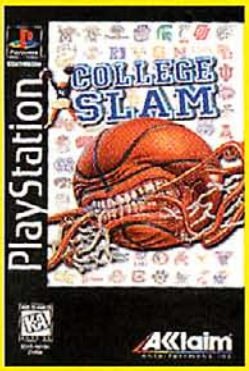
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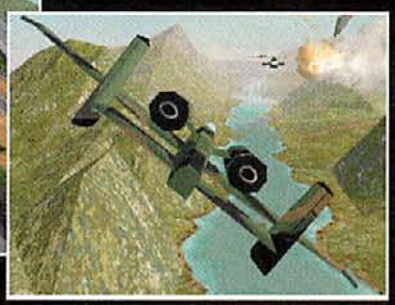
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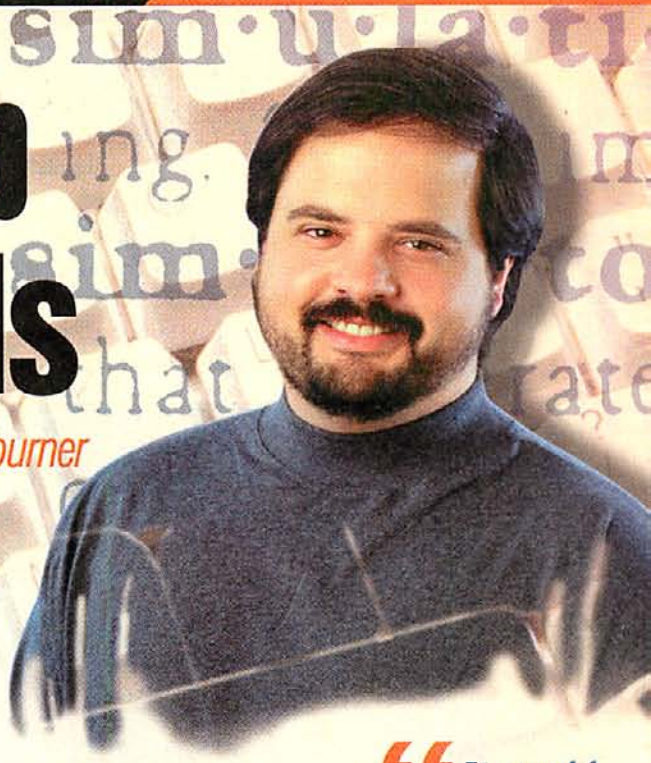
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Patching Up Old Warbirds

Mid-Life Upgrades Throw Recent Sims Into Afterburner

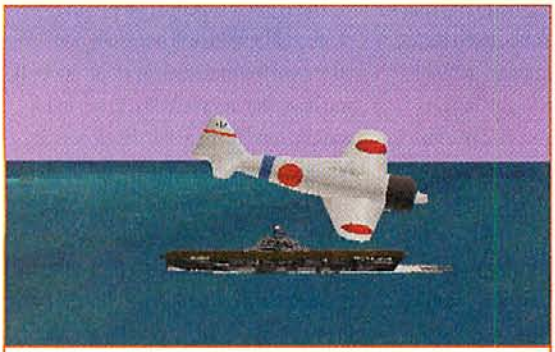


Flying flight sims is just like dating. (Whoa! Let me explain the analogy—I'm not *that* much of a game geek.) Surely you've started going out with someone (bought a new sim) and been truly impressed with that person's (sim's) looks, personality, and, um, handling. But as you get deeper into the relationship, strange quirks pop up. You find unexpected behaviors (bugs) and redundant conversations (missions), and sometimes the person (sim) wants to do different things than you do (exhibits poor control response). Eventually the peculiarities get so annoying that you say it's been fun and head on to the next relationship (sim).

The nice thing about flight sims, though, is that unlike ex-girlfriends, they can be patched. (I'm not bitter—I just dated a few too many Release 1.0s before I married.) Three of last year's best have recently been the subject of extensive patches. You'll find two of the patches on this month's CG-ROM; the EF2000 patch wasn't final when the CD went to press.

EF2000.1

EF2000, in its unpatched form, is a dazzling game. A rich visual and tactical environment, detailed systems control, and a wide variety of missions make it one of the hottest sims of recent memory. However, once you delve deep into the simulation, you'll discover some rough edges. The lack of ground fire and anti-naval missions in the campaign disappoints, but the biggest crime is that your actions have little or no effect on the campaign's outcome.



SLEEK ZEKE The FIGHTER DUEL patch adds the agile A6M2 Zero to the fray.

That's not the case at all with the patched version. Campaigns are fleshed-out, with numerous anti-ship missions, more enemy CAP flights, strong target defenses, and dangerous neutrals who attack if you enter their territory. You can customize your weapon load before each mission, and post-mission debriefs are more thorough. Many details have been attended to—lose your AWACS early in the fighting and be prepared to do without any JTIDS target data for the rest of the campaign.

Pilot AI has been improved—no more planes flying into the ground on approach or ineffective Wild Weasel aircraft. Your own flying habits will have to change as

> **"It would be nice to be confident that you're buying a finished product."**

ON THE RADAR

▶FIGHTER DUEL currently supports only two players over a modem or direct serial connection. Soon you'll be able to take on the whole office with the release of the Net Duel update. This patch will add support for playing FIGHTER DUEL over an IPX-compatible network, using either DOS or Win 95 network drivers. Up to nine players will be able to enter the fray in a free-for-all air battle. The first player will establish the basic rules and setup; then Players will be able to come and go as they please, switch planes after being shot down, and more.

▶In our March flight sim roundup, we mentioned that JETFIGHTER III wouldn't have network or modem support. That's true for the first release, but Mission Studios plans an add-on module later this year that will add extensive multiplayer support.

well: weight and drag of stores now affects low-speed performance, the odd high-speed stalls have been eliminated, and a voice and "break X" will warn you of an imminent ground collision.

Multiplayer mode has seen the most dramatic improvement. Previously, it was more or less a guns-only free-for-all. Gun hits were so difficult that four players could fly around in circles for half an hour without scoring a kill. Now gun damage has been turned up, and short-range missiles are optionally available. Even better, you can now fly the campaign in multiplayer mode, with up to eight human players. With these improvements, the patched EF2000 is a five-star game.



BIG WIG MIG Better views and workable ECM give you a chance against MiG-31s in the patched Su-27 FLANKER.

FLANKER HANKER

Like EF2000, SU-27 FLANKER was rushed out for Christmas. Some features didn't work properly, while others were omitted entirely. Now a series of patches (up to 1.05 at press time) have the Flanker ready for the front lines.

You'll find survival much easier now that the ECM light works, the field of view has been increased to a more realistic 240 degrees, and the missing rear-view mirrors (superbly implemented) have been added. Happily, you'll no longer be surprised by SAMs or AAMs when flying in formation. Better external view options let you pinpoint enemy or friendly aircraft and watch dogfights in progress.

Radar is better modeled, with target aspect angle affecting radar return. Keymaps have been adjusted to better support programmable controllers such as the Thrustmaster TQS.

This is just an interim patch—the planned 1.1 release will hopefully add additional features, such as cloud cover. If you have features you'd like to see in 1.1, you can send them to the developers at *Nsoane@mindscape.com*.

DUEL CARBS

The initial release of FIGHTER DUEL had relatively few problems. However, there's always room for tweaks, and the recent patch (version 1.0.45 is examined here) fine-tunes this superb sim quite a bit.

A new plane, the nimble but vulnerable A6M2 Zero, has been added. The most appreciated feature should be the revamped view support. Keypad views are no longer "sticky." When you release the key, the view returns to the front. Similarly, a toggleable alternate view set is available for joystick view hats, giving side views off the wings instead of angle views behind the tail. A partial panel view shows you the most important instruments while keeping more of the action visible.

Additional controllers are supported, and the second view hat on sticks such as the CH F-16 Combat Stick now trims the aircraft (the function such hats serve on real aircraft). A config file lets you redefine any button or view hat function.

Armament has been split into two banks. You can now fire cannons, machine guns, or both. Bullet lethality is toned down, so kills are a bit harder to get. The flight model has been tweaked, with more realistic roll rates and the addition of prop drag.

In realistic flight modes, you'll now have to catch the wires at the rear of the aircraft carrier to land successfully. Finally, when you die, you'll now get to see your plane explode or splash into the ocean, rather than being unceremoniously dumped back to the results screen.

BETTER LATE THAN...

I'm overjoyed to see these patches. All of these updated games are eminently more playable, and the companies are to be commended for improving their products. Still, it's a shame that business pressures force these companies to release games before their time. It would be nice to be confident that you're buying a finished product.

You'll find the EF2000 patch at www.did.com/patch.html, the Su-27 patch at www.mindscape.com, and the FIGHTER DUEL patch at www.philipsmedia.com/media/games/games.html.

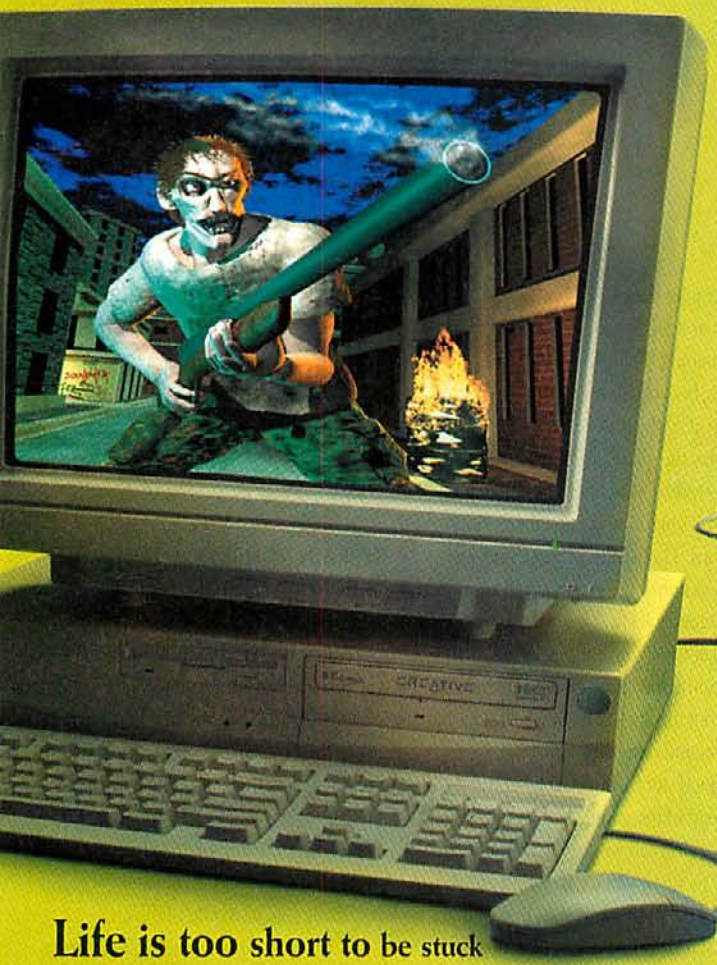
CG ON-LINE

CG TIPS!

If TOP GUN: FIRE AT WILL! crashes on you at the end of a mission, this may get you up and running while you await the inevitable patch. Find the TOPGUN.INI file and change the ASYNC= line to ASYNC=NO. Alternatively, you can try a full install of the game if you have over 100MB to spare on your hard drive.

TOP GUN's terrain graphics may look like Spectrum Holobyte channeled the ghost of Seurat to lead their art team, but they can be improved. Launching the program with the command TOPGUN SUPERHI will effectively double the resolution of the ground texture. You'll need to turn the Terrain Detail setting down to Medium within the sim to get an acceptable frame rate on a P166.

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY INTERMEDIATE ADVANCED

Great Balls Of Fire

Spectrum HoloByte's Action Flight Sim Is A License That Thrills

by Robin G. Kim



WINDOW DRESSING Pop-up windows simplify getting in-flight information for beginning F-14 drivers; real instruments are available as well.

Check any flight sim fan's videotape collection and more likely than not you'll find a copy of *Top Gun*. What the action flick lacked in accuracy it made up for in enthralling action and fantastic jet footage. That formula, which made the movie a huge success, has been carried into Spectrum HoloByte's latest flight simulation. TOP GUN: FIRE AT WILL! isn't the most realistic sim you'll fly, but its non-stop action should keep you glued to the screen.

TOP GUN attempts to capture the excitement, the camaraderie, and even the attitude of the movie and its characters. This time it's you, not Tom Cruise, playing the role of Maverick, a hot shot F-14 Tomcat pilot with a chip on his shoulder. You'll start at Miramar NAS, where you and your wise-cracking RIO, Merlin, compete for the Top Gun trophy. From there, events take you and your comrades on a series of missions spanning three theaters.



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486DX-66 or better (math coprocessor required, Pentium recommended), DOS 5.0 or higher (runs under Windows 95), 8 MB RAM, 30 MB hard drive space, SVGA video, 2x CD-ROM, joystick, mouse, Sound Blaster compatible, ProAudio Spectrum, or Ensoniq SoundScape.
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Ken Allen
Publisher: Spectrum HoloByte, Inc.
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THE NEED FOR SPEED

Missions are tied together using full-motion video clips which are mostly well done—the few cheesy background sets are more than made up for by the great footage of real carrier operations. The acting is generally good; the characters may seem larger than life, but they fit the cocky fighter pilot theme perfectly, and are always entertaining. That's fortunate, because they're with you all the time as you play the game, from voice-overs during briefings and debriefings to the ubiquitous radio chatter during missions. The wealth of video and digitized speech allow you to get to know the characters quickly and immerse yourself in the compelling, but mostly linear, story line. Some may be put off by all this chit-chat, but turning off speech is ill-advised, as some radio messages are vital.

A good story is fine, but air combat is the heart of the game. Almost all missions involve air-to-air work, with only the occasional recon or surface strafing assignment. The 50-plus missions (including a set of standalone practice missions) are varied and unpredictable enough to remain fresh and exciting till the end. As an added bonus, Spectrum promises to post a new mission file each month on the company's web page.



GROUND CLUTTER An Su-27 flies over an uninspiringly rendered Grand Canyon.

TERRAIN BY MONET

With all options maxed out, TOP GUN's graphics look truly impressive at 640x480 resolution, and not bad at all at 320x200. Detail levels and resolution can be changed on the fly. (You may want to turn down the detail when your mission has you flying low to the ground, to increase the game's frame rate.) The stunningly detailed aircraft graphics are the best around, and the sea and translucent cloud renderings are also state of the art. Unfortunately, the terrain graphics don't live up to the same standards—they have a blotchy look reminiscent of an impressionistic oil painting. Because most of the sim's action takes place over 10,000 feet, the poor terrain graphics rarely detract from the gaming experience. (To get sharper terrain renderings, start the game by typing TOPGUN SUPERHI, but expect an extreme frame rate hit.) Though indistinct, the landscape is far from boring, featuring rolling hills, rivers, and cities.

BALANCING ACT

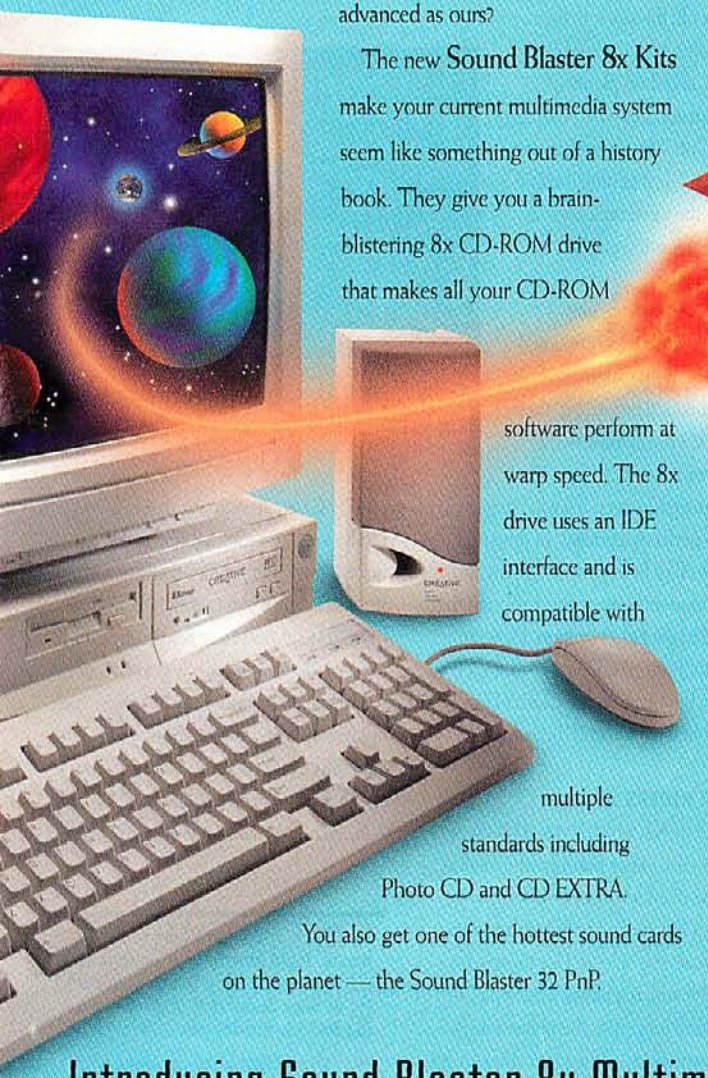
If you're expecting a hard-core F-14 simulation like F-14 FLEET DEFENDER with better graphics and a plot grafted on, stop right here. TOP GUN makes no attempt at total realism—if most of your enjoyment of the namesake movie came

You'll have to search the galaxy to find a more realistic multimedia experience than this.

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GETTING HOOKED Carrier traps can be tricky, but the ILS needles guide you right in.

from pointing out its technical errors, TOP GUN is probably not for you. This isn't to say TOP GUN is a pure arcade game, however. Easier to learn than many flight sims, it doesn't forsake all simulation elements, and the highest of the many difficulty settings should prove challenging for even the seasoned flight sim pilot.

The flight model (loosely based on FALCON 3.0's Hi-Fi model) is fairly good, with a nice fluid feel. Although the plane's low speed handling is better than it should be—making landings pretty easy—buffeting and stalls will bite you if you're careless. The model is accurate enough to reward realistic tactics and energy management—yanking all the way back on the stick all the time will get you nowhere.

Missile modeling is simplified, but the weapons exhibit the proper performance differences. Dodging enemy missiles can be difficult; the key is to beam radar-guided missiles, turn toward heat-seekers, and drop plenty of countermeasures when they get close. Gun kills are far too easy, however—just getting the gunsight in the same area code as the target is often enough to ensure a hit.

Solo missions are rare—you'll usually be accompanied by one or more wingmen. They can't be issued orders, but they at least keep you informed of what they're up to. In fact, sometimes they even tell *you* what to do, such as perform a bracket or drag maneuver. The AI of both your wingmen and your opponents is very good, though they do tend to get target fixation. Protecting your wingmen is vital not only for tactical reasons, but because the death of any primary character will end the game.

RADAR RIDERS

Like US NAVY FIGHTERS, TOP GUN features easy to use pop-up information windows overlaid on a HUD-only view, though a full cockpit with instrumentation can also be selected for those who prefer the added realism. The apparent goal was to maximize the player's situational awareness, so the radar shows a 360 degree view of all objects around the aircraft. An optional arrow symbol points toward the greatest threat, be it a nearby bandit or an incoming missile. The virtual cockpit panning view mode is among the best around; it's fast and provides good visual cues to keep you oriented. From this mode you can also padlock on targets, though sometimes it won't lock onto a target in plain sight.

LOST THAT LOVIN' FEELING

TOP GUN has one serious compatibility problem afflicting a significant number of players (this reviewer included)—on some systems, the game often crashes at the completion of a mission. (The story can be continued after a crash by rebooting and reloading the LASTMISSION file, a workable but annoying solution.) Spectrum HoloByte is working on a patch to address this. If this bug doesn't affect you, though, you should find the program rock-solid.



SORRY, SIR If you screw up in training, you can count on Hondo to chew you out.

TOP GUN offers an intriguing blend of Hollywood-style dogfighting action, a decent dose of flight sim realism, and a story that keeps you coming back for more. The atmosphere is so engrossing that you do feel like you're part of a story. Add a variety of smooth performing multiplayer options into the mix for long term play value, and you come up with a package that you'll want to head to when you—as Maverick said—"feel the need."

APPEAL: Die-hard fans of the movie, flight sim novices or serious sim fans ready for a break from reality; or WING COMMANDER veterans looking for new challenges.

PROS: Action-filled missions with great atmosphere and an intriguing storyline. Solid and fun network and modem play.

CONS: Blotchy terrain graphics. Constant radio chatter can get annoying, especially when re-flying missions. Frequent program lock-ups occur on some configurations.

CG RATED

Reach Out And Shoot Someone

TOP GUN: FIRE AT WILL! supports serial, modem, and IPX network connections. Players can divide into up to four teams with up to 16 human players total, or go it alone in one big free-for-all. Either way, optional computer opponents can be added to keep everyone on their toes; the computer's F-14s look just like those of the human players.



NET RESULTS TOP GUN's net play is solid, but too-easy gun shots may lessen the fun for some.

Except for the rare program crash, the multiplayer modes are stable and very easy to use. Players can join or leave battles in progress at any time, though after you die you're annoyingly forced to go to the status screen to see your results, and then wait for the sim module to reload.

Modem play between two Pentium systems using 28.8 was silky smooth, with absolutely no warping or discernable delays. Compared with standalone play, there is a slight frame rate decrease, but that's a small price to pay for a warp-free environment. Performance over a network is just as good.

The only downsides to the multiplayer modes are that gun hits are way too easy, and there's no way to choose your armament—you always get a preset missile load. Setting up a guns-only fight is not a problem if all players agree to it, but if computer opponents are added in, missiles are a must.

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Le Grande Struggle

Can Napoleon Make It In The Multimedia Age?



When it's done well and kept in perspective, multimedia can actually enhance historical wargames, whether it's the voice-over of the German General Staff adjutant in PANZER GENERAL, or the more visual cues from BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG. Certainly, the gorgeous graphics of those two games didn't hurt them at the box office, either. But their success is inspiring others–for all the wrong reasons. I'm reminded of movie executives, who saw *Star Wars* as a formula for success: "See, J.D., all we need to do is to have some cute robots, nasty-looking aliens, and a lotta special effects, and we got us a sure hit!" Just think for a minute how many bad sci-fi films this approach spawned–you probably can't even remember them all–and imagine how many game producers out there are saying: "Well, J.D., all we need to do is have some tanks running around blasting stuff, some big-name actors, or bad voice-over talent by people who've never played a game; toss in some SVGA graphics and some multimedia from the historical conflict, and we've got ourselves a winner!"



EXQUISITE CHATEAUX So what if the soldier icons are as big as the trees? The look and feel of Talonsoft's BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO will likely put Napoleon back on the gaming map.

When the question is raised, usually by some concerned programmer or designer, why the game as designed has nothing to do with the real-life battle, one of the following responses is given:

1. "Well, let's make it science-fiction. That way, they can't nail us for being non-historical."

2. "This game is in *real-time*. Those old boardgame guys just don't get it. If they complain, we'll tell 'em their reflexes aren't good enough to be a *real* general."

3. "Tell them we didn't want to be restricted by hindsight, so we're exploring *historically viable alternatives*."

4. "What are you talking about? Nobody cares about that historical stuff except a few old greybeards; most people just want to blow things up. Don't you know *anything* about this market?"

This mentality rears its ugly head most prominently whenever the subject of pre-twentieth century wargames comes up–no tanks, no jet planes, no cool explosions, a lot of worried marketing people. Sure, the American Civil War is suddenly

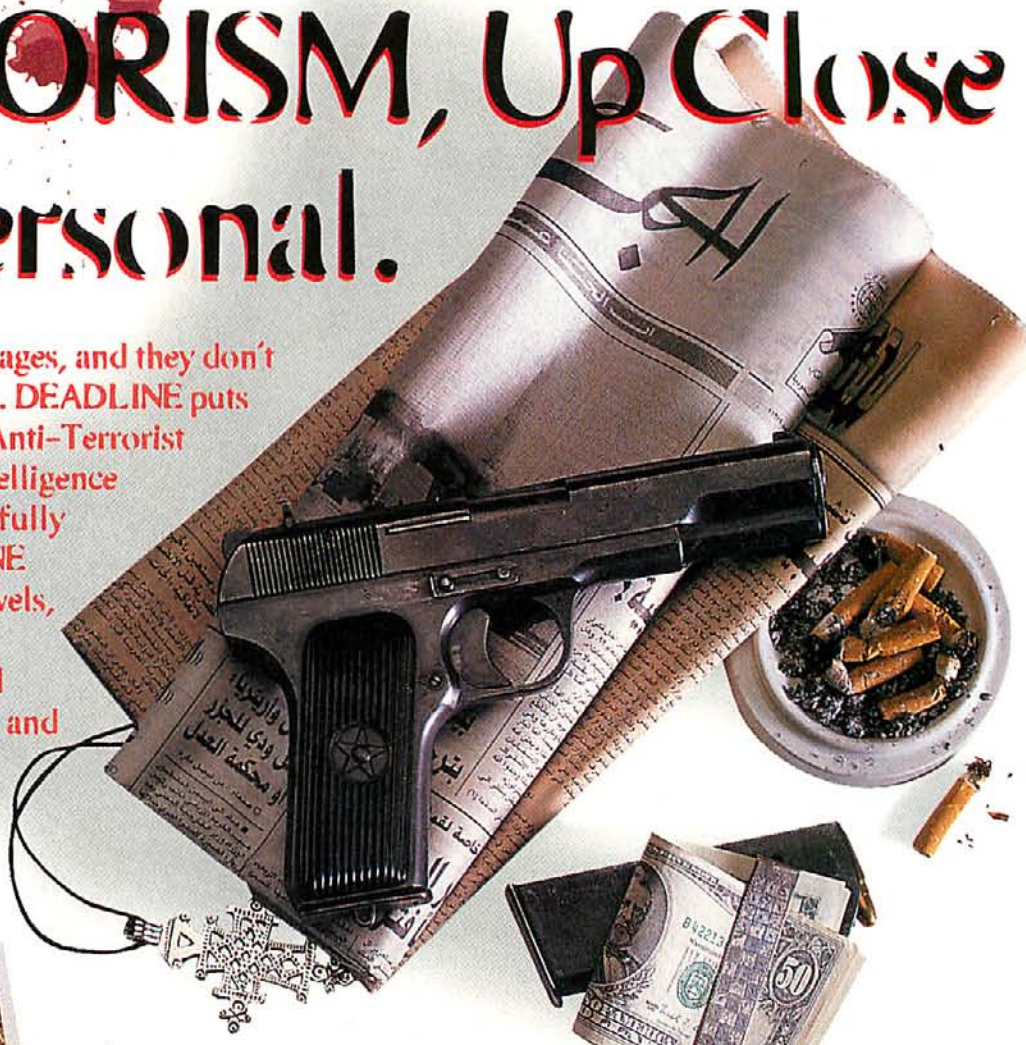
> **"If marketers had their way, Napoleon games would only be insipid sci-fi rip-offs."**

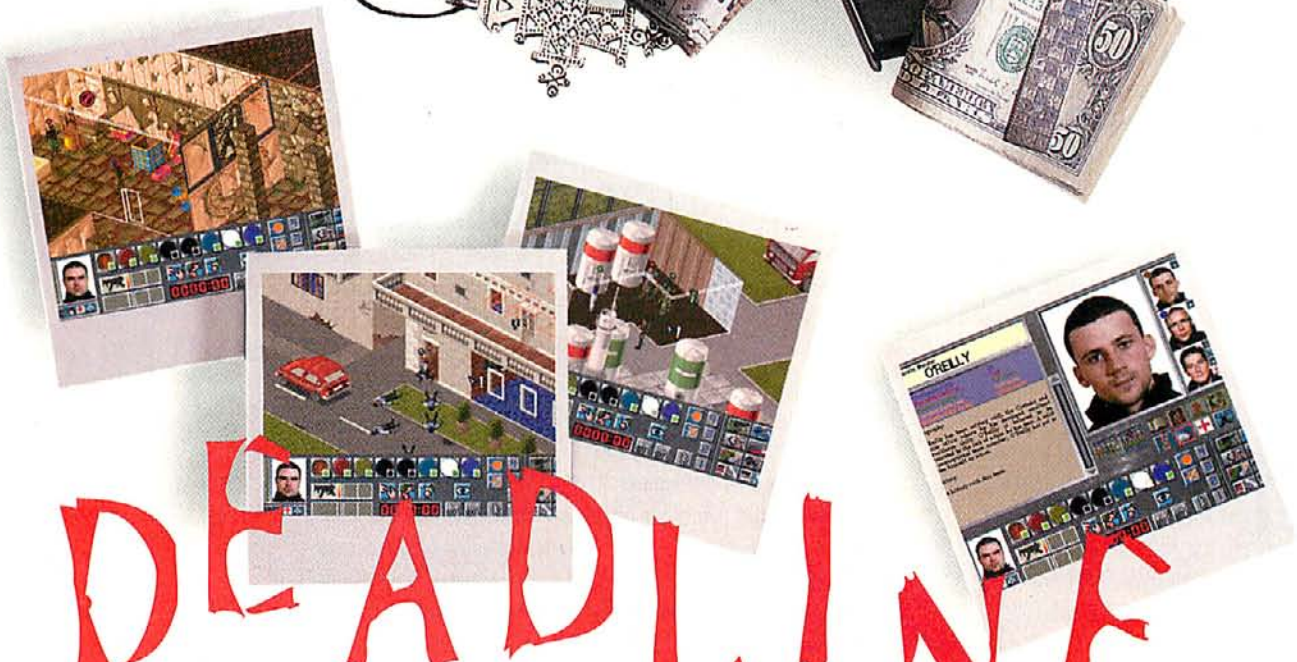
BRIEFINGS

▶THE GREAT BATTLES OF ALEXANDER, much like its historical counterpart (who died young), has met with an untimely fate. Seems SSI was tired of waiting, and told Erudite Software and GMT Games (the boardgame designers) to take their act elsewhere. It's a real shame, because *Alexander* is one of the rare board wargames worth converting to silicon format. The sophisticated design has the best model for unit cohesion and command control of any Ancients warfare game ever published–and it's fairly easy (as wargames go) to play. If the designers of the computer game can work out the bugs in their AI code, this is a sure-fire winner. Rumor has it that two other major wargame publishers are interested–we'll keep you posted. ▶Other Ancients news: Mindscape (SSI's owner) has revived plans to publish LEGIONS EMPIRE. The big flaw of LEGIONS was its lack of a tactical module, which will evidently be solved by an adaptation of the WARHAMMER combat engine–don't hold your breath. ▶The Software Publishers'

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PC-CD ROM

a hot topic again, largely because Talonsoft's BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG is selling quite briskly. But while I enjoy pitting Lee vs. Grant as much as anyone, I can't help but feel sorry for Napoleon. It's been years since *Le Petit General* had a hit. There hasn't been a good Napoleonic wargame since SSI did BATTLES OF NAPOLEON, which sold less than 10,000 copies, according to the publisher. The last big-budget attempt to place Bonaparte on the computer was the ill-fated FIELDS OF GLORY by Spectrum HoloByte. Despite the game's luscious graphics, it didn't exactly break sales records, proof that gamers are much more savvy than marketing folks give them credit for.

SHINY NEW NAPPY

So it comes as somewhat of a surprise that a few companies are actually bringing new campaigns of Napoleon to market–albeit with a little caution. The most prominent of these is Talonsoft's BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO, and the obvious question is whether the game system can make the transition from the American Civil War to Europe in 1815, while retaining enough historical flavor and play balance.

Bob McNamara of Talonsoft thinks so. Boardgamers will recognize Bob as "Mr. Advanced Squad Leader" from his design years at Avalon Hill, and it was Bob's input that resulted in many of the positive changes to the BATTLEGROUND system between ARDENNES and GETTYSBURG. From what I've seen so far, Bob and the other folks at Talonsoft have good reason to be excited about their new war child.

WATERLOO'S most obvious difference from GETTYSBURG is the range of the smoothbore musket, much shorter than the rifled musket more common in the Civil War. This has immediate effects on tactics, which are accentuated by the formation options available. In addition to forming in line or column, units may also be "unformed." An unformed group of units won't suffer the negative effects of disruption, but they neither move as effectively as a column nor fight as well as units in line. An example of how a unit

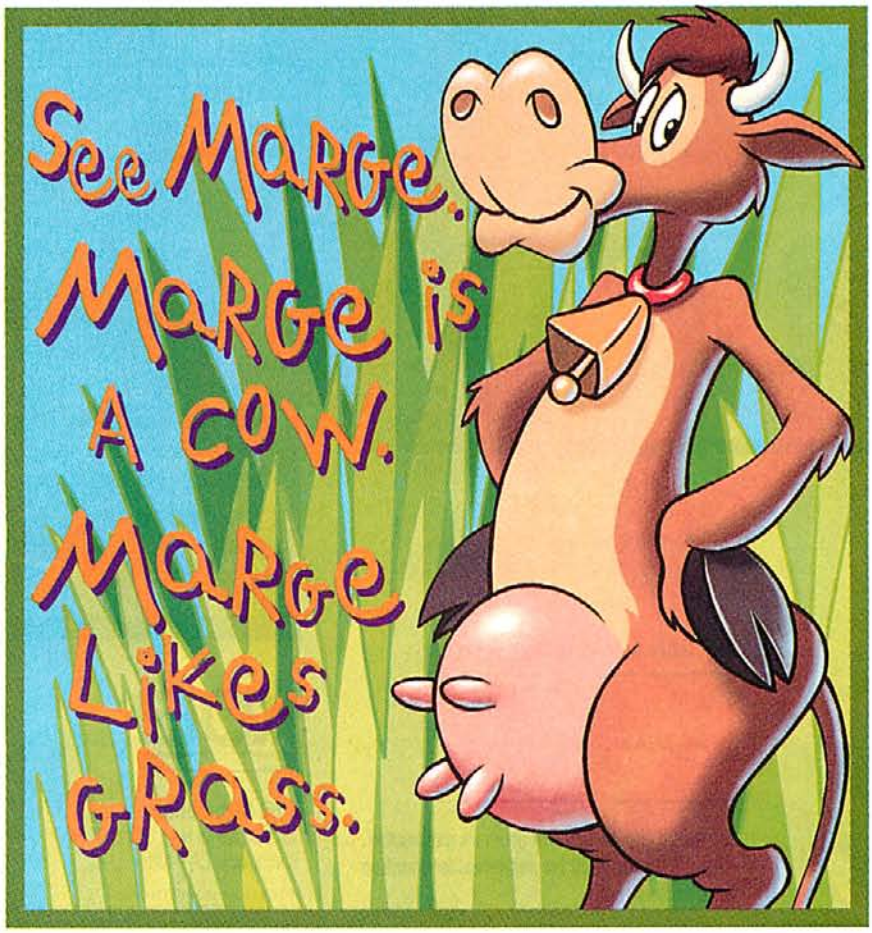
BRIEFINGS

Association strives to position itself as an oasis of ethics in a turbulent industry, as evidenced by their strong stand against software piracy. But those lofty aspirations don't help the average gamer to understand where SPA is coming from when it hands out the annual "Codies" awards (check out the SPA winners in our *Read.Me* section). In a year with WARCRAFT II, STEEL PANTHERS, BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG, HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC, and COMMAND & CONQUER, among other strong candidates, the Best Strategy Game Award from SPA went to the pretty, but agonizingly incomplete design of ASCENDANCY. Maybe the judges should actually play some of the games in the category before voting next year?

▶Maxis has a lot of interesting projects in the works. SIMCITY 2000 is going online, with real-time action that lets you play cooperatively or competitively. SIMPARK lets you design a national park, place it anywhere in North America, and fill it with the animals you want. No word yet on how this game reconciles the Contract With America and the Birch Society.

▶PAX IMPERIA II has been delayed until late Summer, possibly as late as September. For those of you who've never had the pleasure of playing the original PAX (only on the Mac), PAX II looks every bit as grand in scope as the venerable MASTER OF ORION, but differently-flavored, with the option of playing either real-time or turn-based.

▶Incredible Simulations next "last stand" game, ZULUWAR!, will probably be their biggest hit yet. Jeff Lapkoff has secured the services of Dennis Bishop, who brings both a knowledge of history and a background of clean, enjoyable wargame designs (Dennis' board wargame *Like Lions They Fought*, published in *Command* magazine, is an enjoyable romp through Zululand).



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CG TIPS!

Warcraft II–Tired of waiting for your peons to finish work on your much-needed Gryphon Aviary or other buildings? Assign one peon to build the structure, and then assign other peons to go to the construction site and begin "repairing" it. The more peons you assign to repair duty, the faster the structure will be built. Soon, as your army of peons hammer away at the construction site, your anticipated Gryphon Aviary will spring to life.
Derrick Chin, Fremont, CA

Allied General–Can't seem to get major victories in the North African Campaign? You don't have the time to be as deliberate as Monty was historically, so just build better units. Matilda IIs are the best way to keep the desert sands out of your shoes; buy at least two, preferably three, and expect to take a few losses along the way.–*Terry Coleman*

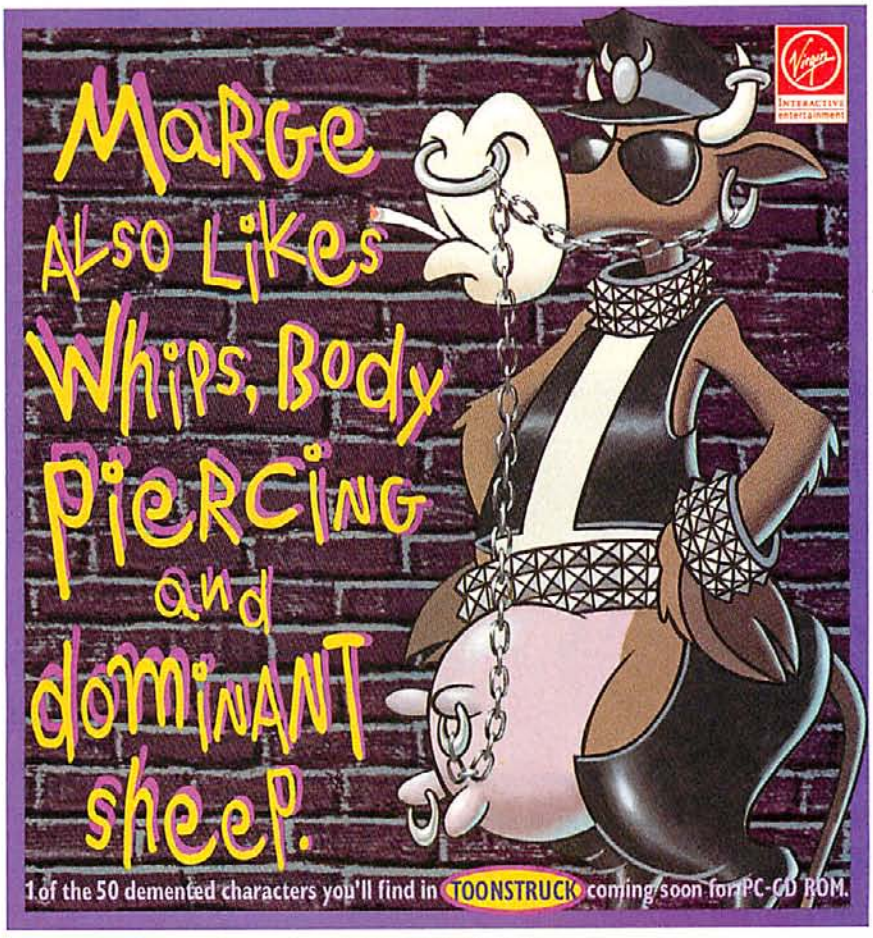
might become unformed would be infantry trying to move through a village while remaining in line–it simply isn't going to happen. Thus, the "unformed" rule is a good way of simulating the practical realities of a given situation–making us grognards happy–while keeping the game's mechanics relatively simple.

Similar methods are used to model cavalry charges, a must in any Napoleonic game. In the movement phase, cavalry first declares charges. Then the infantry in its path desperately tries to form into square formation; its success or failure is based on the unit's troop quality, already a cornerstone of the BATTLEGROUND system. Then there is the customary defensive fire phase, any enemy cavalry counter-charge attempts, and then the charge is resolved during the melee phase. The design team is also considering letting a cavalry unit charge a target more than one turn's ride away, provided it makes all troop quality and morale checks. Skirmishers likewise depend on troop quality in order to attempt withdrawal before melee.

WATERLOO has a number of cosmetic changes to keep the marketing folks happy as well. The sprites are 50 percent larger than in GETTYSBURG, and the Battleview cutaway hexagon view has never looked better. More importantly, though, the scenarios have a great deal of variety and "what-if" scenarios. What if Grouchy had shown to help Napoleon? What if Blucher's Prussians had arrived later, earlier, or not at all? How would Wellington's reverse-slope defense have fared if the French had attacked over a dry field in the morning, instead of a morass of mud in the afternoon?

BG: WATERLOO's competition comes mainly from the Old Guard of Avalon Hill, whose *Waterloo* board game is being converted–1960s rules intact–to a '90s PC palate (see last month's "19th Century Warfare" feature for details). While you're waiting for AH or Talonsoft to meet their Waterloo, you might check out NAPOLEON THE EMPEROR, a Windows turn-based game by Reality Engine Computer Games. It looks a lot like BATTLES OF NAPOLEON, but is even simpler to play. Essentially, you choose a formation, give it an order, do the same with your other units, and execute your grand strategy by ending the turn. Since the AI has a limited amount of things to keep up with, it isn't bad. All in all, the game is a lot like Swfte's GETTYSBURG game, without the arcade-ish artillery of that game. The shareware version of NAPOLEON THE EMPEROR is available on CGW's ZiffNet forum, or you can order the registered version by calling 800-2424-PsL or 713-524-6394, or by FAX to 713-524-6398 or by CompuServe e-mail to 71355,470.

If this "Napoleonic maneuver" becomes a trend in this industry, I'll be among the first to cheer. For now, though, I'll be satisfied if the games just get released with no cute robots, arcade curiassers, or bad voice-over acting in Pidgin French. Until next time, Happy Hougomont.



Circle Reader Service #239

A Universe of Possibilities

The Spacelanes Will Soon Be Overrun With Bioderms and HERCs

by Scott May

SNEAK PREVIEW
GAME STILL IN DEVELOPMENT

Hybrid games can be a curious, adventuresome experience, sort of like ordering food at a strange Chinese restaurant: take one item from column A, another from column B, and so on. The result can be either delightfully delicious or completely unpalatable. Happily, Sierra's MISSIONFORCE: CYBERSTORM falls squarely into the first category—a tasty blend of strategy, role-playing, arcade and miniature board gaming.

Viewed from a distance, this Windows 95 game is far from original, borrowing elements of titles both past (Infogame's 1990 sleeper, FULL METAL PLANET) and present (Activision's MECHWARRIOR 2). The key difference is style and delivery, qualities CYBERSTORM has in abundance. Toss in some cutting-edge bells and whistles—in the form of modem, network and Internet multiplayer options—and the game stands tall on its own merits.



HEX MARKS THE SPOT Some of CYBERSTORM's strengths are its many units, intuitive hex-based battlefield and a straightforward interface.

You begin the game as a lowly ensign, fresh out of the training academy, assigned to an off-world military command post. Your employer, a faceless and no-nonsense corporation called UNItech, doesn't pull punches when it comes to your chances for survival. In the opening sequence, the company is brutally frank to new recruits: "UNItech doesn't give a damn about you," the directive reads. "If you screw up, we'll strand you on a barren moon somewhere with a beacon strapped around your neck guaranteed to attract every Cybrid in the sector." Kinda gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling, doesn't it?

Cybrids, as you may have gathered, are the enemy—a hostile race of mechanized warriors whose territorial aggression is matched only by their ingenuity in battle. UNItech's weapons against the Cybrids are a fleet of more than 25 HERCs (massive, building-sized robot tanks), fully adaptable to each mission's terrain type, offensive goals and defensive requirements. Because human physiology has failed to keep pace with machine technology, UNItech created artificial beings, called Bioderms, which are directly linked to the HERCs, yet remain under your control.

Your task is to create unique Bioderms from the genetic ingredients available to you at the HERC command center, integrate them with the machines, and oversee each mission's operations. First, visit the BioVat to cook up a suitable Bioderm, rated in attributes such as piloting, weapons skills, health, age, genetic stability, leadership and tech level. These biomechanical marvels are created from a Base Genetic Matrix (BGM) pool, cloned from the DNA of history's greatest leaders. The further you advance in the game, the more powerful BGM models you can access.

Next, stop by the VR Training facility to enhance your Bioderm's initial qualities. The more powerful and experienced a Bioderm becomes, the higher up the genetic ladder it climbs. Advanced Bioderm classifications, each containing a five-tier sub-ranking, include Protoderm, Cytoderm, Plastoderm, Genoderm and Metaderm.

Finally, you must link Bioderm pilots with the HERCs, which in turn can be customized for the mission at hand. Care for wounded Bioderms at the MedVat, where you can regenerate, stabilize or



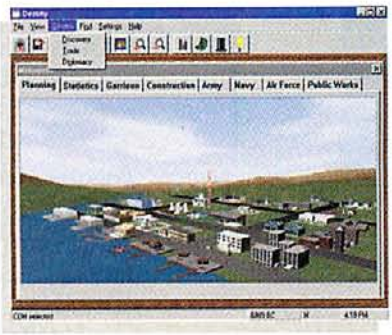
SHADY WARRIORS Detailed status reports let you monitor the performance of your HERCs in battle.

INTERACTIVE MAGIC PRESENTS

DESTINY

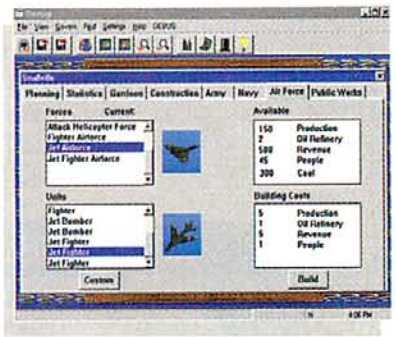
Man's Journey Through Time

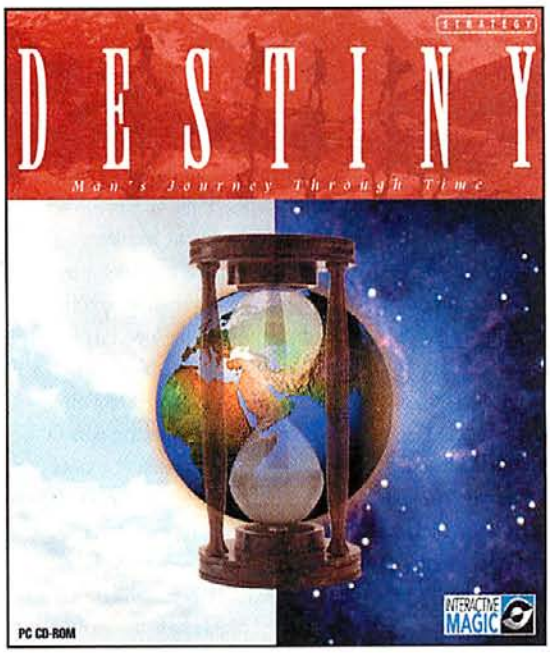
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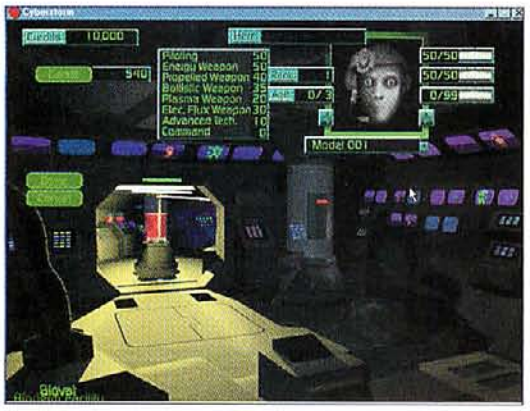
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detox damaged pilots. If your alter egos are beyond hope or disappointingly inept, you can recycle them back into protoplasmic soup, regaining a fraction of your initial credit investment.

All of this high-tech outfitting takes money, of which you have little. You begin with 10,000 credits, and additional credits and bonuses are awarded based on mission success and overall performance. Ensigns are also restricted to owning no more than three HERCs and three Bioderms, which further limits your abilities. Take heart, however; the early missions are relatively easy, allowing you to quickly advance in rank, build resources and expand your military reach. As expected, when you progress further, the difficulty of your tasks and the rewards increase proportionally. When you're not blasting Cybrids, most missions allow you to earn credits mining ore, a task that harks back to the HERCs' non-military origins.

CYBERSTORM defaults to one-player, single mission mode with four possible skill levels. Drop by the HERC center's Comm facility to choose from available missions at your present level of command. Tutorials provide hands-on training in managing resources, selecting missions and controlling battlefield forces. You can also embark on a career, where the goal is to rise through the ranks, build a fleet of sophisticated HERCs and a roster of experienced Bioderms.

Missions unfold on a four-way scrolling planetary map, its surface patterned by a traditional hexagonal grid. Though viewed primarily from an overhead perspective, the varied terrain, outposts, ships and HERCs are rendered in vivid, animated 3-D, like a miniatures game brought to life. Map controls let you rotate the playing field, zoom in for tactical battles, and zoom out for a broad strategic overview. Unless otherwise specified (in the game's extensive preference menu), the game plays in turn-based combat. A HERC's movement per turn is limited to the energy generated by its reactor. Simply plot a path with one mouse click, note the potential drain on your energy resources, and click again to set the HERC in motion. Direct your forces toward a common goal, or split them up to perform different tasks simultaneously.

Both movement and combat can take place in the same turn. The fire menu lets you individually select which weapon systems are active during combat. Some weapons, such as lasers and missiles, require reloading after each firing, which calls into play important tactical decisions. The game features a massive number of weapon upgrades, incrementally offered as you rise higher in rank. The probability of a hit is displayed before firing, based on your pilot's skill level, distance, line of fire and selected weapon. Another fascinating aspect of combat is precise control of each HERC's defensive shields. You begin with equal deployment along the six-sided hex outline, but can quickly redistribute power to the side from which you're currently taking a pounding. Damage reports and internal systems monitoring is available throughout the mission.

Overall, battlefield controls are straightforward and easily mastered, thanks to onscreen help and an intuitive screen layout. This is a dark and moody game, filled with sparse but ambient sound effects, voice-overs and a dramatic cinematic music. Arcade lovers may initially dislike the game's slow, deliberate pace or its lack of in-your-face mech action. But once the strategic and tactical nuances take hold, they'll discover a game that offers much deeper rewards.

The beta preview copy ran slow as cybersnails, even on a PCI-equipped Pentium 90 system with 16 MB of RAM and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive (excessive overhead for what is essentially a strategy game). At the time of this writing, minimum hardware requirements were not yet available, but judging by the game's pre-release performance, it's safe to say that anyone at the low end of the system scale—486/DX2 66 MHz with 8 MB of RAM—will face constant frustration. The product's multiplayer options—modem, network and Internet connections—could not be tested, but seem almost certain to cause further performance degradation, even on high-end gaming systems. Hopefully, Sierra will iron out these problems in the final release. Anyone remember "Outpost?" 'Nuff said. But if the designers stay on track, and fix some niggling system requirement problems, then MISSIONFORCE: CYBERSTORM has the potential to become a major crossover hit, appealing to both veteran strategy gamers and today's mech-obsessed action crowd.

The Cyber Universe

The Cyberstorm universe comprises three major star systems: Paracelsus (your starting point), Ionis and M138, each containing a multiple array of planets. You must complete all required planetary missions before advancing to the next system. Mission types fall into three categories: Reconnaissance, Mining and Military. In Recon, your goal is to map unknown terrain and any Cybrid presence. Mining expeditions require that you gather a specified percentage of ore, while repelling Cybrid interference. Military missions can be either defensive (protecting a HERC installation) or offensive (search and destroy Cybrid facilities or forces). The final mission in each star system—termed Elite Military—is to destroy the Cybrid home base.

As HERC commander, you could wage a straight march through each star system's mission lineup. A more lucrative—and dangerous—strategy is to stick around to replay the planetary missions dozens, or conceivably even hundreds, of times. Boring? Not a chance, thanks to the program's random mission generator, which ensures different terrain, battlefield layout and Cybrid forces every time you play. The advantage of prolonged service in a single star system is to continue earning credits, building your HERC and Bioderm forces, and advancing in rank. The disadvantage is that the more missions you complete and the more Cybrids you defeat, the more difficult each regenerated mission becomes.

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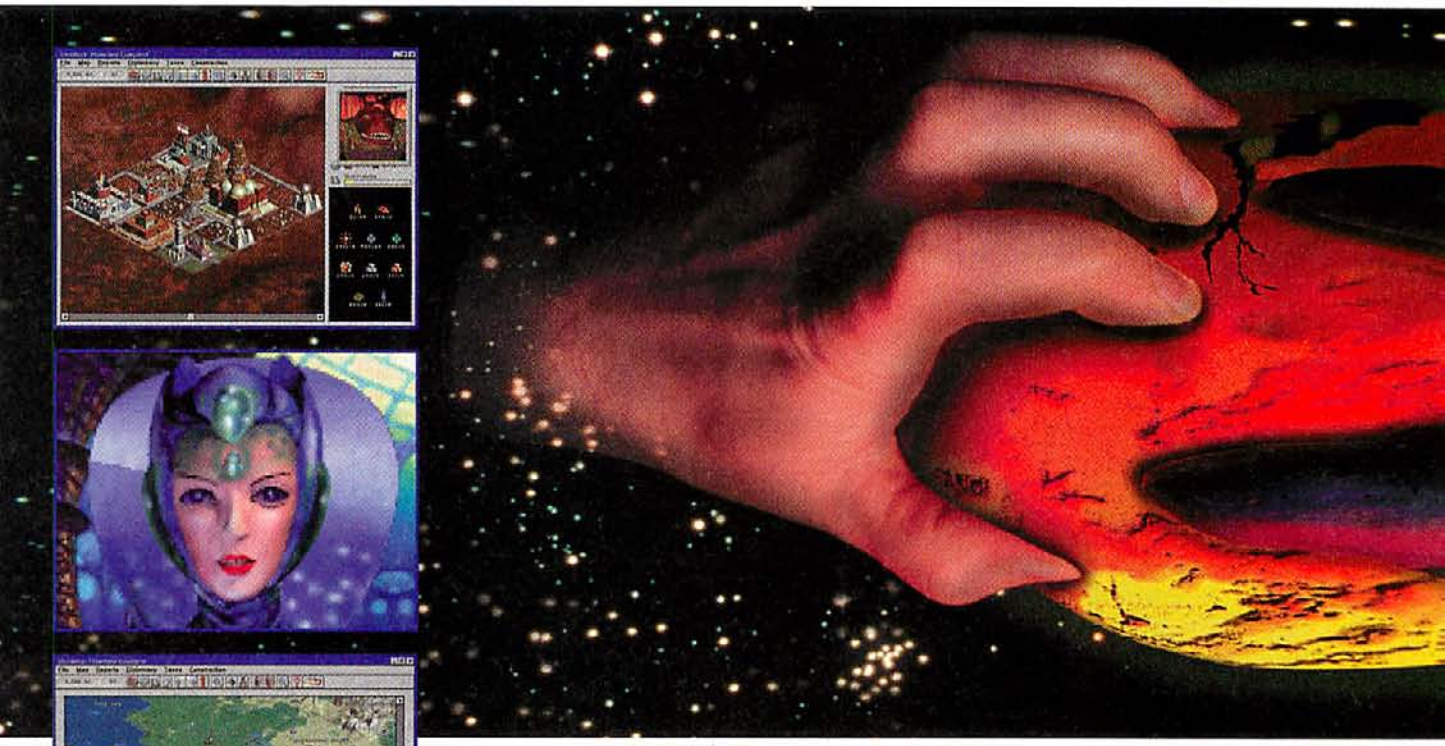
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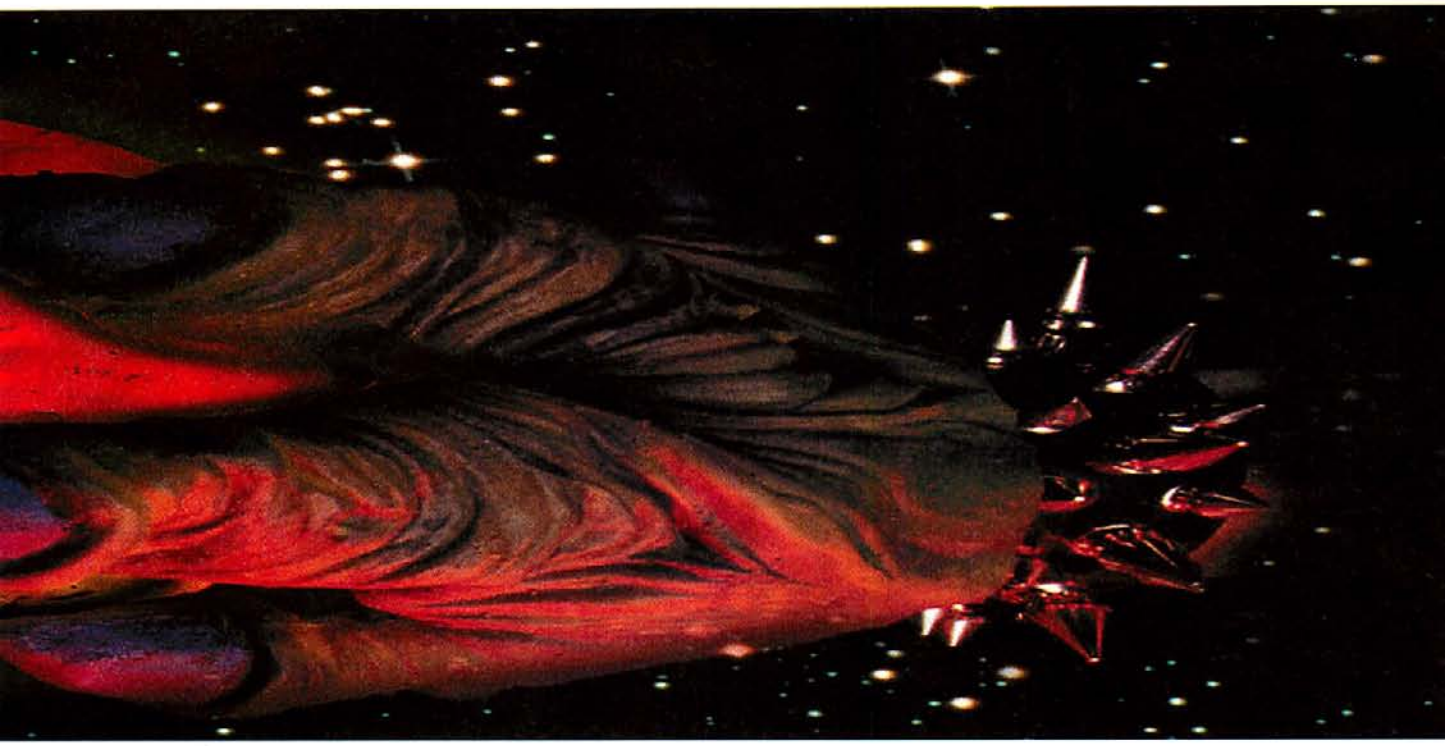
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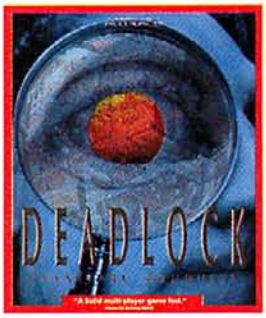
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Space Bust?

A Galactic Enterprise That Doesn't Quite Lift Off

by Martin E. Cirulis



LOOK AT MY PRETTY STARPORT Nabbing landing rights for the various worlds is only the beginning; you have to build your starports' industries as well.

Call me a hopeless optimist, or just a geek who hasn't accepted the fact that humanity's reach for the stars stalled nearly 30 years ago on the moon's pocked face; but for me, a future in space means endless opportunities and surprises. This feeling pervades most of what I write, and even colors my thoughts on game design to the point that when I pick up a game with a science fiction twist, I hope to find a little more between the bits than I normally would from an analogous modern or historical game. Unfortunately, my high hopes for SF titles have brought me disappointment more than once, and I'm afraid this newest outing into the depths of space is less than stellar. What we have is another "Buck" tycoon game from Impressions/Sierra—and, while SPACE BUCKS has the look and feel of a top-notch SF game, it takes very little scratching to find a simulation simple and repetitive enough to make TRANSPORT TYCOON seem like CAPITALISM.

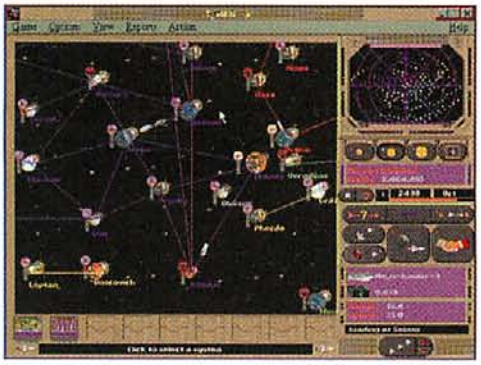


Price: $54.95
System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or 95, 486-33 or better, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports SoundBlaster and Windows compatible sound cards
of Players: 1
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: David Lester
Publisher: Sierra
Bellevue, WA
206-649-9800
Reader Service #: 329

SPACE MERCHANT PRINCE

Although nowhere in the game is there an acknowledgment to The Old Master, the initial premise of SPACE BUCKS (SB) is reminiscent of the Merchant Prince section of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* saga. Here you are, a young entrepreneur from a culture just clawing its way back from an interstellar Dark Age, and commerce seems like just the thing to get the lost colonies of the galaxy back on speaking terms. The twist here is that you are not alone in this galaxy, as the good ol' humans must compete against the companies of four alien neighbors.

Each game starts in a random galaxy of over a hundred stars. SB assumes each star consists of a single planet, inhabited by one of the five galactic races and offering at least two of the four basic trade commodities of the Galaxy: Passengers, Food, Ore and Fuel. The amount of these trade commodities is low on undeveloped worlds and gets higher as you ascend the six levels of the socio-economic scale.



INTERGALACTIC TWISTER At least, that's the route of these trading vessels; to reap profit, you must ply the trading lanes and deliver and pick up cargo from various worlds.

You begin the game with a single starport on your homeworld and a single tiny starship. In order to expand, you must negotiate with neighboring worlds for exclusive rights to build a starport. The prices vary. Less developed worlds will gladly take a small quarterly fee, while well-developed worlds will often demand big payments to get at their impressive output, as well as costly favors like restaurants or even sport arenas. And if it wasn't difficult enough to balance the cost of landing rights against possible income, there is also the danger of becoming involved in an expensive bidding war if you bid on a world near a competitor's trade lanes.

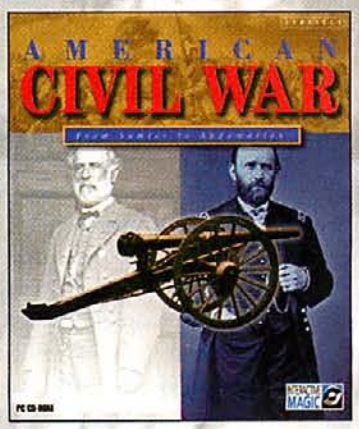
Luckily, you can create industries on these worlds that will produce more valuable cargoes. Fuel becomes chemicals, ore can be processed into metals, and each race has a special Good it can produce that really rakes in the profit if you can find another world interested in it.

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

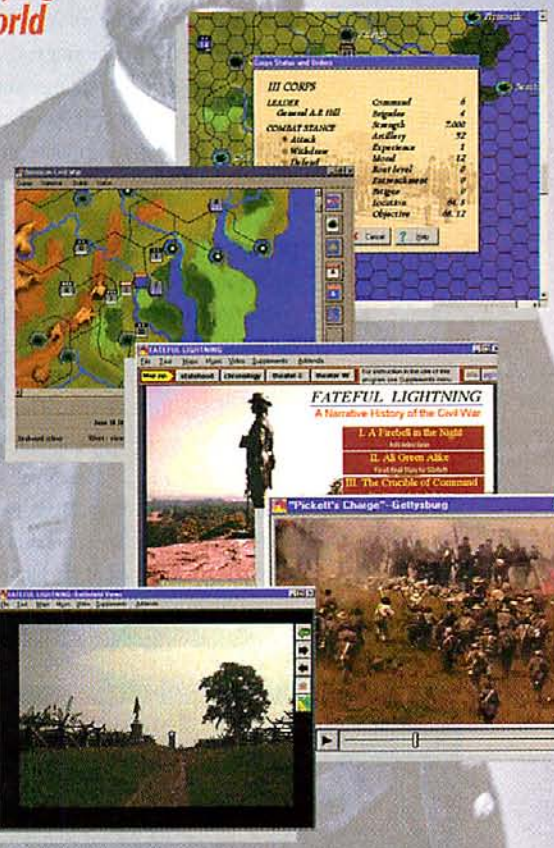
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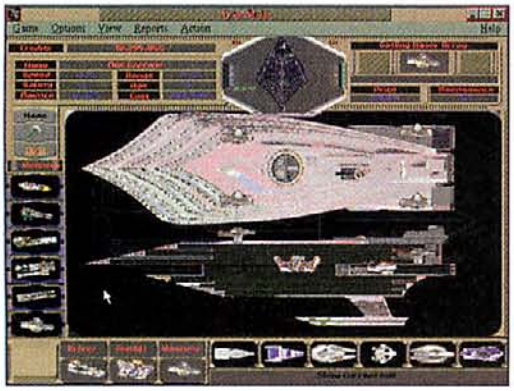
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USELESS GADGETS The ship customization is cool but not very useful; you don't really need weapons or shields because pirates hardly ever attack.

And this brings us to the whole money-making process of SB: moving cargoes from supply worlds to consumer worlds by creating trade routes for your ships to follow. A few clicks of the mouse produces a loop for a ship to travel; a few more give precise commands for what to pick up and deliver at each world.

Of course, what would a transport empire stretching across the stars be without the starships to do the work? In SPACE BUCKS, players get to choose ready-made ships or design their own based on six hulls of varying cargo capacity and three other components: Engines, Shields and Weapons. All ships require an engine, but shields and weapons are optional and useful only in the (rare) event of a pirate attack. While all hull sizes are available from the outset, the three additional components slide slowly up a six-tiered technology scale whose development is outside the player's control. Since this is basically a transportation game, engine improvements that increase a ship's speed and range should be coveted; the more worlds a ship can serve in one fiscal quarter, the more profits it can reap.



WHAT COMPETITION? The most interaction you ever have with your rivals is bidding for (and losing) landing rights at different worlds.

Amidst the trade routes, there are the usual assortment of random mishaps to plague you. Also, if the player chooses, the spaceways can be enlivened by espionage attacks, which range from making a rival's world break its charter, to inducing pirates to attack competitors. The traditional pals of the Tycoon gamer, the dreaded bank and the lovable stock market, also make an appearance in SB, though in pretty basic forms.

With all this, you'd think that all SB needed was a little style to put the components together to create a game the equal of AIR BUCKS. Well...

"WHERE'S THE CONGEALED-PROTEIN-SUBSTITUTE?"

What bothers me the most about SPACE BUCKS is the fact that it will probably get a number of glowing reviews based on how good it looks and feels for the first couple of hours: the SVGA graphics are sharp and imaginative; the alien races are interesting; the random map and large numbers of worlds seem to offer extensive replayability; the ship building system appears to have all the traits you'd find in a fancy spaceploitation strategy game; and most importantly, SPACE BUCKS is a child of the very successful AIR BUCKS.

Despite all this, if you play further into the game, you find it devoid of the quality you'd expect from a sci-fi Tycoon game. The alien races have very little impact on the game and I would hazard that it makes no difference at all which one you choose to play. The ship designs are interesting but, except for cargo-size and engine speed, the variations are irrelevant (even the computer rarely arms or shields its ships). SPACE BUCKS also displays either a gameplay "bug" or the worst AI cheating I have seen in recent years. It is so blatant, that in a game where your profits are supposedly proportional to your fleet, a computer player can lose every ship and still somehow gain money!

Even worse, though, is the game design itself. It seems to me that a game about building a Galactic shipping empire should be more interesting than terrestrial commerce, not less — SPACE BUCKS is so basic that each planet is less interesting than the smallest towns in RAILROAD TYCOON. Even the sense of direct competition with your computerized companies is mostly lost by the fact that only one company may operate from a planet at a time. With no real contact between the companies, there is no need to worry about such important business concepts as advertising, service quality or even ticket prices. And what about taking advantage of the galactic venue? Instead of predictable random events like meteor swarms or earthquakes, why didn't the designers think about the subject matter and plague our companies with outbreaks of war or strange alien viruses? I'm afraid SB has very little to do with its fine Airline predecessor, and far more to do with the same mediocrity that created the lamentable POWERHOUSE.

If you love to create ornate moving sculptures that generate endless money but do very little else interesting, then SPACE BUCKS will have some appeal for you. Set at its hardest level, the game offers two or three hours of challenge before your empire grows to the point that nothing can really harm it and you simply sit around absorbing planets from your competitors and doing more and more unwieldy upgrades to your entire fleet. Other than that, it is pretty to look at, but definitely no AIR BUCKS in Space.

APPEAL: Gamers looking for a great-looking first few hours will have fun, but not those desiring extended gameplay.

PROS: Good-looking introductory Tycoon game.

CONS: Uninspired design, simplistic modeling, dubious AI "advantages" and very short-term challenge make this game an "also ran" in the space race.

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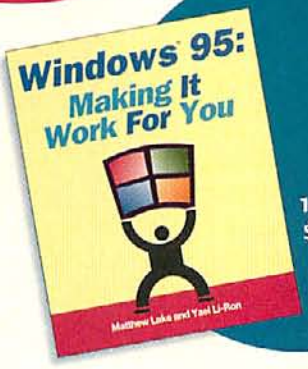
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The purpose of this summary notice is to inform all Class Members of the proposed settlement of the lawsuit brought against Syncronys Softcorp. in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois. As explained in detail in a notice of class action and proposed settlement which will be distributed by mail (the "Mailed Notice"), if you purchased SoftRAM or SoftRAM95 on or before March 15, 1996, you are a member of the Settlement Class and your rights will be affected by the legal proceedings in this action. You are encouraged to read this Notice and the Mailed Notice in their entireties. You have a right to request exclusion from the Settlement Class but you must do so by June 15, 1996 by following the procedures outlined in the Mailed Notice. If you do not request exclusion from the Settlement Class, the terms of the settlement and judgment will be binding as to you.

Generally, the proposed settlement, which has been preliminarily approved by the Court, provides that in exchange for releasing all claims against Syncronys Softcorp. and its distributors and retailers in connection with SoftRAM or SoftRAM95, Class Members may be entitled to (1) a full refund or a free software upgrade or free software, at the Class Member's election, and (2) coupons which may be used in connection with the purchase of other Syncronys products. A hearing will be held on June 24, 1996 at 10:30 a.m. before the Honorable Aaron Jaffe in Courtroom #2405, Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois to determine whether the proposed settlement, including payment of attorneys' fees, is fair, reasonable and adequate, and whether a final judgment should be entered approving it and dismissing the lawsuit against Syncronys. You may appear personally or by counsel; if you do not appear you will be represented by Class Counsel. To object, you must file a written objection, received by the Court by June 15, 1996.

IF YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE SETTLEMENT CLASS AND HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE MAILED NOTICE, YOU SHOULD REQUEST A COPY BY TELEPHONE (1-800-335-4059). PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE COURT FOR INFORMATION. ALL QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT SHOULD BE DIRECTED IN WRITING TO THE PLAINTIFFS' CLASS COUNSEL, LARRY D. DRURY, ESQ., 180 NORTH LA SALLE ST., #2416, CHICAGO, IL 60601, OR BEN BARNOW, ESQ., 105 W. MADISON, 22ND FLOOR, CHICAGO, IL 60602.

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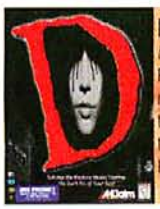
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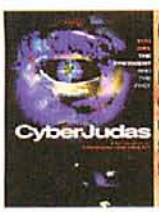
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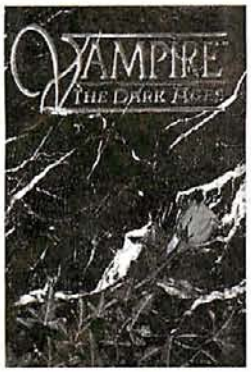
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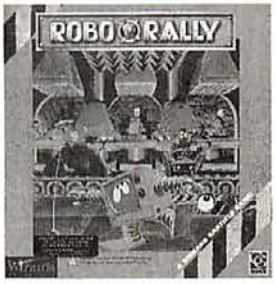
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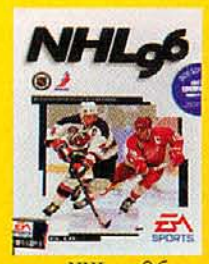
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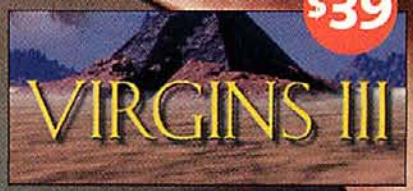


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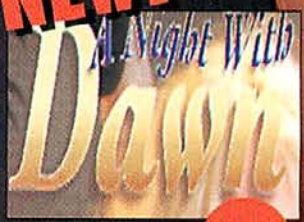
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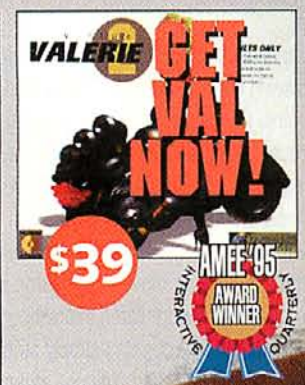


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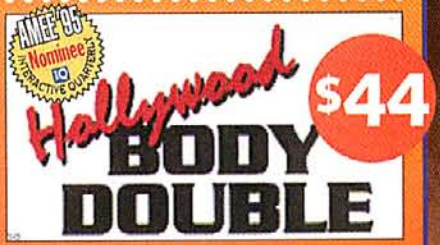
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HALL OF FAME

Welcome to the Cooperstown of Computer Games. Here, raised upon pedestals, you'll find the games that broke the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

HIGHLIGHTS

WAR IN RUSSIA
Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984



Prior to WAR IN RUSSIA, gamers who wanted to play strategic-level games that covered the entire Eastern Front were restricted to massive boardgame designs which covered two or three cafeteria-sized tables at a game convention. Computer games were by and large limited to smaller actions where tactics were all-important and a strategic perspective either non-existent or so abstracted that strategic-level gamers felt the computer format was unsuited to the depiction of large actions. With WAR IN RUSSIA, the first "monster" game on the computer, Gary Grigsby was able to present theater-wide action on a wide-scale and give individual gamers the thrill of being the theater commander for the first time. Experienced gamers came to discover that the AI could be faked out easily in an early move of subterfuge, but the game continued to have popularity because of its scale, subject matter and suitability for playing by mail (i.e. the save positions were in the right spot for players to be able to save their move, send a disk and wait for the return of the disk for their next move) or e-mail (sending saved game files at a rapid 300 baud per second). It was popular among wargamers for as long as the Apple II remained alive, and it provided some of the initial research for Grigsby's later SECOND FRONT and WAR IN RUSSIA on the IBM, though neither had the same game mechanics.

WASTELAND
Interplay Productions, Inc., 1986



It is difficult to speak of computer role-playing games without invoking the venerable title, WASTELAND. This post-holocaust adventure was set in the Mojave Desert regions of California, Nevada and Arizona where the players were "rangers," the last remnant of law and order, trying to solve a mystery involving both massive atomic mutations and an incursion of aliens circa 1950 "B" drive-in movies. The game proved the value of a skill-based role-playing system and created interesting algorithms for handling the non-player characters. One couldn't simply strip the NPCs of their items as in other games; the NPCs had "minds" of their own. Further, although the game was combat-intensive and used a computerized form of Michael Stackpole's combat-rich MERCENARIES, SPIES AND PRIVATE EYES game system (still available in boxed form from Flying Buffalo, Inc.), it was replete with ethical dilemmas and non-combat puzzle-solving of the most devious sort. The story was written by Mike Stackpole, and many of the maps were fleshed out by veteran game designers like Liz Danforth and Ken St. Andre. Now, years later, WASTELAND is still held with great esteem by *CGW*'s readers and was most recently available on Interplay's 10th Anniversary CD-ROM.

Inductees Prior To 1989

- **BATTLE CHESS** (Interplay Productions, 1988)
- **CHESSMASTER** (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
- **DUNGEON MASTER** (FTL SOFTWARE, 1987)
- **EARL WEAVER BASEBALL** (Electronic Arts, 1986)
- **EMPIRE** (Interstel, 1978)
- **F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER** (MicroProse, 1988)
- **GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT** (SSI, 1986)
- **KAMPFGRUPPE** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **MECH BRIGADE** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **MIGHT & MAGIC** (New World Computing, 1986)
- **M.U.L.E.** (Electronic Arts, 1983)
- **PIRATES** (MicroProse, 1987)
- **SIMCITY** (Maxis, 1987)
- **STARFLIGHT** (Electronic Arts, 1986)
- **THE BARD'S TALE** (Electronic Arts, 1985)
- **ULTIMA III** (Origin Systems, 1983)
- **ULTIMA IV** (Origin Systems, 1985)
- **WAR IN RUSSIA** (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
- **WASTELAND** (Interplay Productions, 1986)
- **WIZARDRY** (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
- **ZORK** (Infocom, 1981)

Modern Inductees

- **FALCON 3.0** (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
- **GUNSHIP** (MicroProse, 1989)
- **HARPOON** (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
- **KING'S QUEST V** (Sierra On-Line, 1990)
- **LEMMINGS** (Psygnosis, 1991)
- **LINKS 386 PRO** (Access Software, 1992)
- **M-1 TANK PLATOON** (MicroProse, 1989)
- **RAILROAD TYCOON** (MicroProse, 1990)
- **RED BARON** (Dynamix, 1990)
- **SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION** (MicroProse, 1991)
- **THEIR FINEST HOUR** (LucasArts, 1989)
- **THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND** (LucasArts, 1990)
- **ULTIMA VI** (Origin Systems, 1990)
- **ULTIMA UNDERWORLD** (Origin Systems, 1992)
- **WING COMMANDER I & II** (Origin Systems, 1990-91)
- **WOLFENSTEIN 3-D** (id Software, 1992)

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common.

Software fixes, or "patches," for buggy programs have become a necessary evil until we reach the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs. Red indicates new files.

Absolute Zero Upgrade: Final revision corrects a nasty crash bug in the Hammer and Anvil scenarios. 1/6/96

Allied General V1.01 Upgrade: Upgrades AG to version 1.01. Contains several bug fixes. 2/8/96

Battleground: Gettysburg V1.01 Upgrade: Fixes reported bugs and gameplay issues. 1/18/96

Capitalism Update: Fixes a problem with the presidents and another rare item bug. 1/11/96

CivNet Update: Fixes several reported problems. 12/8/95

Command & Conquer V1.19P Patch: Includes fixes for all known bugs and some game balance changes. Works with V1.07 or V1.18p. 1/19/96

Crusader: No Remorse V1.21 Update: Includes several new features and fixes. 12/22/95

First Encounters V1.06 Update (English CD Version): Fixes reported bugs. 12/6/95

Flight Unlimited V2.4S Upgrade: Upgrades Flight to version 2.4S. Contains many bug fixes. 2/7/96

Front Page Sports Football Pro 96: Fixes several technical issues. 1/4/96

Gabriel Knight 2: Fixes all known problems with GABRIEL KNIGHT CD and speeds up restore of save games. 1/5/96

Hardball 5 Update: Updated stats for the end of the 1995 season. Rosters updated to end of January 1996. 2/16/95

Harpoon Classic Mac V1.57j Update: Fixes several user reported bugs and adds air-to-air to the HDS9 BattleSet. 1/11/96

Harpoon Classic Windows V1.55e Update: Fixes several user reported GPFs and adds the Windows Scenario Editor. 1/11/96

Hive Update: Makes the game easier. 12/4/95

MechWarrior 2 DOS Version V1.1 Update: Fixes several things, including the right side taking more damage on mechs, increased joystick support and Windows 95 crash problems. 11/20/95

NHL 96 Update: Fixes a variety of technical problems, including playoff lock-ups or problems with saving playoff games to hard disk. 12/2/95

PBA Bowling for Windows V1.10: Incorporates several fixes and improvements. 12/27/95

Riddle of Master Lu V2.05 Update: Fixes more known problems within the original release, including jumpy mouse movement, switch problems in the billiard room. 1/8/96

Steel Panthers V1.12 Update (Unofficial): Lots of fixes by Gary Grigsby himself. Note: SSI does not support this patch. 1/15/96

Stonekeep V1.2 Update: Fixes reported bugs. 1/19/96

SU-27 Flanker V1.03: Contains files needed to update SU-27 to version 1.03. Includes several new features and some fixes. 2/14/96

Wing Commander IV Joystick Upgrade: Alternate joystick data acquisition routines that allow some systems to work properly with WC4. 2/25/96

Thunderscape V1.1 Update: Incorporates numerous changes and fixes. 1/3/96

TIE Fighter CD Joystick Update: Should cure problems with Microsoft Sidewinder 3D Pro, Suncom Raptor or other joysticks incorporating axes from joystick 2. 1/23/96

Unnecessary Roughness '96 Update: Fixes sound and video problems. 1/5/96





These patches can usually be downloaded from the major online networks (CompuServe, GEnie, ZDNet) and Computer Gaming World's Web Site (http://www.zdnet.com/~gaming), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's BBSes or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase.

Publisher BBS Numbers

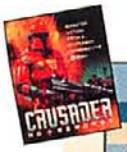
Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers' bulletin board systems. Call with your modem parity settings at N-8-1.

Accolade (408) 296-8800
Apogee (508) 368-7036
Bethesda (301) 990-7552
Blizzard (714) 556-4602
Broderbund (415) 883-5889
Capstone (305) 374-6872
Creative Labs (405) 742-6660
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MicroProse (410) 785-1841
Microsoft (206) 936-6735
NovaLogic (818) 774-9528
Origin (512) 328-8402
Papyrus (617) 576-7472
Sierra Online (206) 644-0112
Spectrum HoloByte (510) 522-8909
SSI (408) 739-6137 or (408) 739 6623
Virgin Interactive (714) 833-3305

THE COMPUTER GAMING POLL • A MONTHLY SURVEY OF THE READERS OF COMPUTER GAMING



You've read our take on the latest games, now here's a chance to see what your fellow gamers think. The CG Top 100 is a monthly tally of game ratings provided by our readers via the CG Poll ballot found in each issue. Approximately 50 games are rated each month, and the results are added to the aggregate results from past months. This historical database serves as a terrific reference for what you, the gamers, feel are the best plays in gaming.



TOP ACTION GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	9.94
2	DOOM II	id Software	9.77
3	Dark Forces	LucasArts	9.70
4	Virtual Pool	Interplay	9.52
5	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	9.48
6	System Shock	Origin	9.19
7	The Need For Speed	Electronic Arts	9.12
8	Heretic	id Software	9.08
9	Hexen	Raven Software	9.04
10	Earthworm Jim	Activision	8.90



TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	10.13
2	Shannara	Legend	9.48
3	Full Throttle	LucasArts	9.44
4	Woodruff & Schnibble	Sierra	9.28
5	Relentless	Electronic Arts	9.12
6	Ecstatica	Psygnosis	9.09
7	Under A Killing Moon	Access	9.04
8	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin	8.94
9	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	8.91
10	Riddle of Master Lu	Sanctuary Woods	8.91



TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Monopoly	Westwood/Virgin	9.09
2	Incredible Toons	Dynamix	8.86
3	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	8.85
4	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley	8.79
5	Clockwerx	Spectrum Holobyte	8.25
6	Hodj n' Podj	Virgin Interactive	8.16
7	Shanghai-Great Moments	Activision	7.75
8	Lemmings Chronicles	Psygnosis	7.47
9	Multimedia Celebrity Poker	New World Computing	7.28
	Bridge Olympiad	QQP	7.28



TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander 3	Origin	10.57
2	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	10.26
3	Mech Warrior 2	Activision	10.05
4	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	10.01
5	U.S. Marine Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.76
6	U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.60
7	Wings of Glory	Origin	9.56
8	Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	9.51
9	EF2000	Ocean	9.44
10	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	9.38



TOP SPORTS GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	NBA Live'95	Electronic Arts	9.86
2	NHL Hockey	EA	9.77
3	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	9.64
4	FPS Football Pro 96	Sierra	9.21
5	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	8.93
6	Front Page Sports Baseball	Dynamix	8.76
7	Hardball IV	Accolade	8.70
8	Hardball 5	Accolade	8.28
9	Tony La Russa 3	Stormfront Studios	8.12
10	Rugby World Cup 1995	Electronic Arts	7.91



TOP STRATEGY GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Warcraft II	Blizzard	10.46
2	X-COM	MicroProse	10.37
3	Command & Conquer	Virgin	10.03
4	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	9.92
5	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	9.81
6	Master of Magic	MicroProse	9.66
7	Warcraft	Blizzard	9.64
8	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	9.38
9	Warlords II Deluxe	SSG	9.27
10	VGA Planets	Tim Wisseman	9.00



TOP ROLE PLAYING GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	9.19
2	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	9.07
3	Ravenloft: StoneProphet	SSI	8.98
4	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	8.64
5	Stonekeep	Interplay	8.38
6	Menzoberranzan	SSI	8.26
7	Ravenloft	SSI	8.16
8	Mordor	TDA	8.00
9	Druid	Sir-Tech	7.70
10	Dark Sun: Wake of the Ravager	SSI	7.64



TOP WARGAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Panzer General	SSI	10.46
2	Steel Panthers	SSI	10.38
3	Battleground: Gettysburg	Talonsoft	9.94
4	Rise of the West	RAW	9.63
5	Flight Commander 2 Mission Bldr	Avalon Hill	9.48
6	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	9.38
7	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	9.35
8	Custer's Last Command	Incredible Simulatio	9.12
9	Tanks	SSI	9.00
10	Tigers on the Prowl	HPS Simulations	8.97

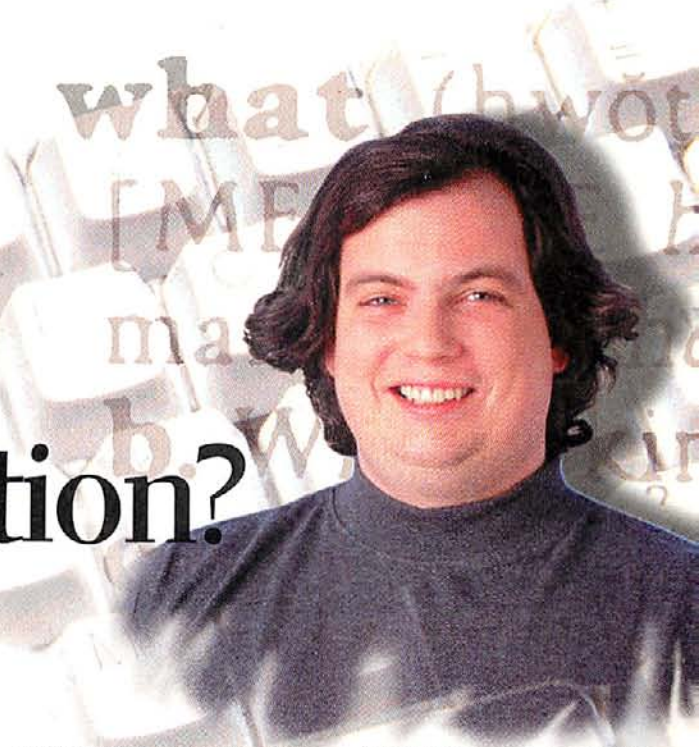
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	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★ 1	Wing Commander 3	Origin	SI	10.57
★ 2	Warcraft II	Blizzard	ST	10.46
★	Panzer General	SSI	WG	10.46
4	Steel Panthers	SSI	WG	10.38
5	X-COM	MicroProse	ST	10.37
6	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	SI	10.26
★ 7	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	AD	10.13
8	MechWarrior 2	Activision	SI	10.05
9	Command & Conquer	Virgin	ST	10.03
10	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	SI	10.01
11	Battleground: Gettysburg	Talonsoft	WG	9.94
★	Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	AC	9.94
13	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	ST	9.92
★ 14	NBA Live '95	Electronic Arts	SP	9.86
15	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	ST	9.81
16	DOOM II	id Software	AC	9.77
	NHL Hockey	EA	SP	9.77
18	U.S. Marine Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.76
19	Dark Forces	LucasArts	AC	9.70
20	Master of Magic	MicroProse	ST	9.66
21	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	SP	9.64
	Warcraft	Blizzard	ST	9.64
23	Rise of the West	RAW	WG	9.63
24	U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.60
25	Wings of Glory	Origin	SI	9.56
26	Virtual Pool	Interplay	AC	9.52
27	Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	SI	9.51
28	Flight Commander 2 Mission Bldr	Avalon Hill	WG	9.48
	Shannara	Legend	AD	9.48
	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	AC	9.48
31	EF2000	Ocean	SI	9.44
	Full Throttle	LucasArts	AD	9.44
33	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	WG	9.38
	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	ST	9.38
	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	SI	9.38
36	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	WG	9.35
37	Woodruff & Schnibble	Sierra	AD	9.28
38	Warlords II Deluxe	SSG	ST	9.27
39	FPS Football Pro 96	Sierra	SP	9.21
40	System Shock	Origin	AC	9.19
★	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	RP	9.19
42	Custer's Last Command	Incredible Simulatio	WG	9.12
	The Need For Speed	Electronic Arts	AC	9.12
	Relentless	Electronic Arts	AD	9.12
★ 45	Monopoly	Virgin Interactive	CP	9.09
	Ecstatica	Psygnosis	AD	9.09
47	Heretic	id Software	AC	9.08
48	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.07
49	Hexen	Raven Software	AC	9.04
	Under A Killing Moon	Access	AD	9.04

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
51	Tanks	SSI	WG	9.00
	VGA Planets	Tim Wisseman	ST	9.00
53	Ravenloft: Stone Prophet	SSI	RP	8.98
	CivNet	MicroProse	ST	8.98
55	Tigers on the Prowl	HPS Simulations	WG	8.97
56	The Grandest Fleet	QQP	ST	8.96
	Perfect General II	QQP	WG	8.96
58	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin	AD	8.94
	Transport Tycoon	MicroProse	ST	8.94
60	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	SP	8.93
61	Riddle of Master Lu	Sanctuary Woods	AD	8.91
	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	AD	8.91
63	Earthworm Jim	Activision	AC	8.90
64	Warhammer	Mindscape	ST	8.88
65	Descent	Interplay	AC	8.86
	Incredible Toons	Dynamix	CP	8.86
67	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	CP	8.85
68	Serf City	SSI	ST	8.80
69	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	CP	8.79
70	Harpoon II	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	8.78
71	Front Page Sports Baseball	Dynamix	SP	8.76
72	Star Trek: TNG, Final Unity	Spectrum HoloByte	AD	8.75
73	1830	Avalon Hill	ST	8.72
74	The Dig	LucasArts	AD	8.71
75	Hardball IV	Accolade	SP	8.70
76	Buried In Time	Sanctuary Woods	AD	8.65
77	Mortal Kombat 3	GT Interactive	AC	8.64
	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	RP	8.64
	King's Quest VII	Sierra	AD	8.64
80	Caesar II	Sierra	ST	8.62
	Superheroes of Hoboken	Legend	AD	8.62
82	1942 Pacific Air War Gold	MicroProse	SI	8.61
83	Magic Carpet 2	EA	AC	8.56
84	SU-27 Flanker	SSI	SI	8.53
85	Werewolf vs. Comanche	NovaLogic	SI	8.50
	Allied General	SSI	WG	8.50
	Death Gate	Legend	AD	8.50
88	FX Fighter	GTE Entertainment	AC	8.46
89	1942 Pacific Air War	MicroProse	SI	8.45
90	Apache	Interactive Magic	SI	8.43
	Future Shock	Bethesda	AC	8.43
	Dark Legions	SSI	AC	8.43
93	Lords of the Realm	Impressions	ST	8.42
94	Sim City CD-ROM	Interplay	ST	8.40
95	Stonekeep	Interplay	RP	8.38
96	Cyclemania	Accolade	AC	8.37
97	Fighter Duel	Philips Media	SI	8.35
98	Loderunner	Dynamix	ST	8.31
99	Hardball 5	Accolade	SP	8.28
	Celtic Tales	Koei	ST	8.28

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. ★ = Top game of type. Red = New Game, AD = Adventure, RP = Role Playing, SI = Simulation/ Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

What's The Deal With... Science Fiction?



Can somebody please explain to me why, in an industry where at least half the titles on the shelves at any given moment involve some kind of SF or Speculative bent, and a sizable percentage of consumers would probably consider themselves "fans" of SF, the games themselves so very rarely do a good job with what should be an infinity of possibilities? I have a few ideas to explain this state of affairs, but most of them involve dark Cabals and Entropic conspiracies, and my shrink told me not to talk about this stuff in public.

Seriously though, it's unfortunate for us that gaming is relatively newborn, compared to SF (which I believe is working its way through late adolescence) and is more vulnerable to "it doesn't matter" syndrome. All the problems of a fledgling art form are exacerbated when you believe that the mechanics of a game are the only issue that matters, and that premise or even a story is something to be hung loosely about the graphics at the end of the production run. While it's certainly true that for action or most strategy games, the gameplay accounts for 80 percent of the success of the product, I think it's a mistake to ignore the fact that a clever and well-thought out premise can be the added magic that will take a good game over the top into the realm of "Great."

For me, part of the appeal of DOOM was its heroic, twisted premise, which harkened back to the great Humanist SF stories of the '50s and early '60s—when there was no humanity-crushing force, be it alien or magical, that couldn't be defeated by a smart monkey with a big enough gun. It was genuinely satisfying to take on those demons; they may have been torturing helpless sinners for the first half of eternity, but they looked a little less cocky staring down the steel depths of a double-barreled Remington in the hands of an angry primate.

Strat titles like Sim-Tex's MASTER OF ORION and the upcoming sequel MOO 2: BATTLE OF ANTARES have also benefited greatly by having a convincing premise, whose implications were woven into the game itself. Certainly this can partially explain their success versus the uninspired fare from Impressions (like SPACE BUCKS or WHEN TWO WORLDS WAR).

Of course, nowhere is the battle between good writing and knee-jerk cliché mining more obvious than in the realm of the venerable Adventure game, the sub-genre where you can find every Hollywood investor with extra pocket change lurking nowadays—all looking to bankroll story ideas so weak that they couldn't thrive even in the hyperbaric chamber of the straight-to-video market. While the failures and the thinking behind them are dreadfully apparent, (witness Byron Preiss's MARTIAN CHRONICLES and ROBOT CITY: "Hey, let's take some of the most evocative works by two of the Old Masters of SF, and reduce them to driveling adventure game shticks that were old when *Colossal Cave* made it big time! The people who read this Sci-Fi stuff are all rabid geeks anyway, they'll never know the diff.") a few recent titles are giving me something akin to hope that computer games may someday complement SF, instead of just propagating its worst qualities. While THE DIG actually had the wit to think an adventure game might benefit from dialogue written by a real writer, (the stalwart Orson Scott Card), the surprising MISSION CRITICAL went even further in improving the sub-genre by making the game serve the "reality" of the story. I didn't have to play Reversi or fetch a part from a guy in another village once while repairing my rippled Battlecruiser. It was wonderful.

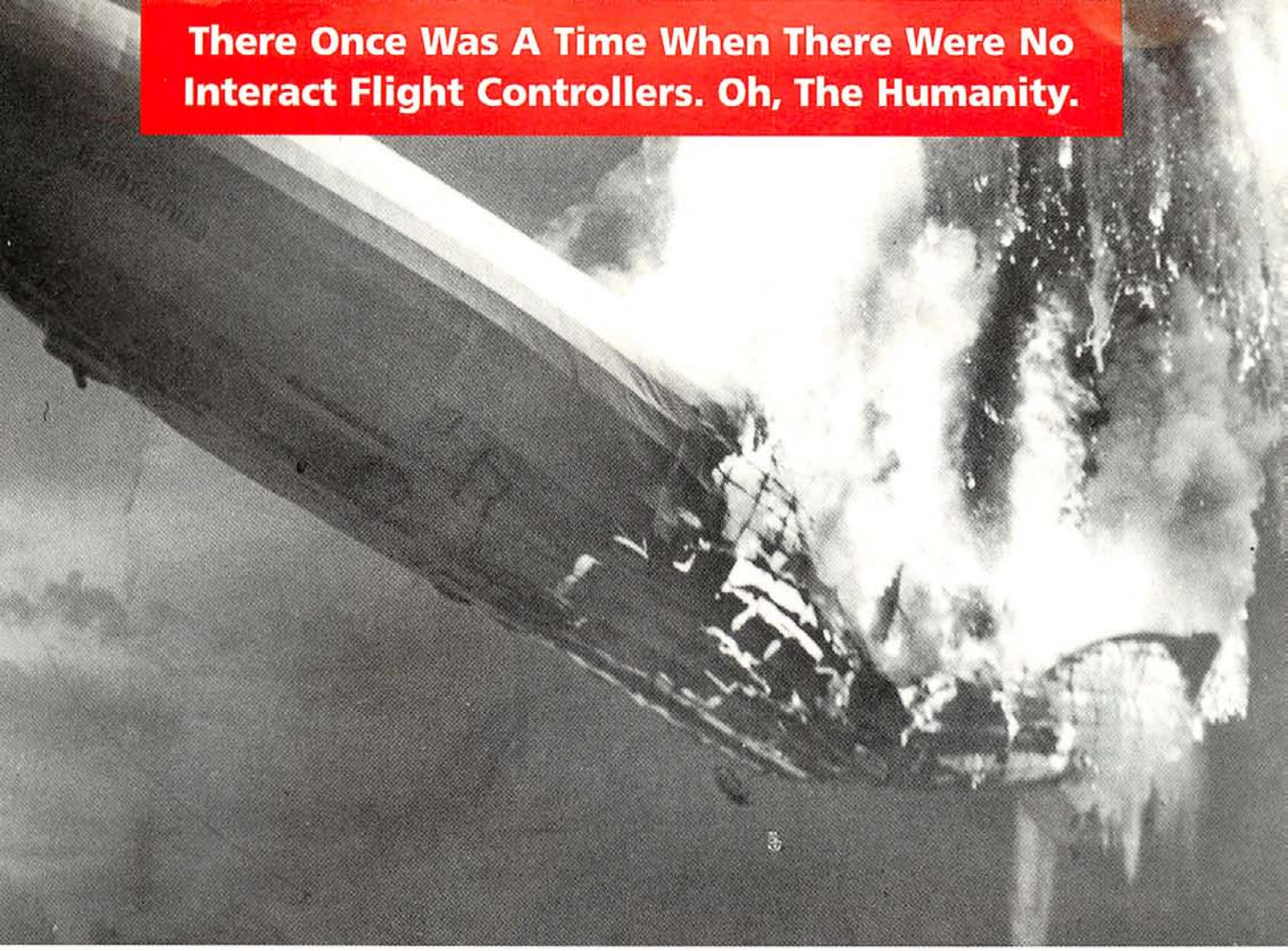
> **"A few recent titles are giving me something akin to hope that computer games may someday complement SF."**

To be honest, though, my optimism has been given its greatest lift by such recent titles as I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM and PSYCHIC DETECTIVE, where the writers were allowed to disturb and provoke the player, instead of just shock and puzzle them.

If adventure games are going to evolve into a valid form of mature entertainment on a par with movies (as is the hope of all the suits investing in game companies), then it's time to leave behind the '50s Drive-in "Good Enough" thinking, and start treating SF like a genre that has been read and written by some of humanity's brightest lights for over 150 years.

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